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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

MARCH 1904.

*Nature's Comedian.*¹

BY W. E. NORRIS.

CHAPTER XVII.

HISTRIO REDIVIVUS.

'**T**HINK I see my way. Look me up Ashley Gardens to-morrow afternoon,' was the telegram which Harold despatched to Shepherd as the outcome of the two visits that he had paid that day. Those two visits, if conclusive upon no other point, had at least freed him from all doubt with regard to the advisability of his prompt return to the stage, and that was quite as definite a conclusion as he desired. What he precisely did desire in the shape of an ultimate conclusion it would have puzzled him to say; but then it was really not yet necessary for him to know. Like a hesitating purchaser, he wanted to secure the refusal of more than one good thing, dimly prescient that when the time should come for him to make his choice, he would be very apt to regret what he had rejected. Not for an instant did the idea cross his mind that he had damaged himself with Lilian by speaking of his brother's play as his own. He had, in truth, begun to think of it as more his own than Dick's, and he had, at all events, pretty good authority for believing that by his interpretation of the piece it must stand or fall.

This was the opinion unhesitatingly expressed both by Shepherd and by Moore when they came to call upon him

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together on the following day. The latter, indeed, stated in so many words that his mind was quite made up against appearing in a part which he had never relished and to which the objections, so far as he was concerned, had been rendered too glaring to be ignored in the course of the last few weeks.

'It isn't good enough, my dear Dunville,' he declared; 'what I am offered simply isn't good enough! Or, if you prefer to put it differently, let us say that *I* am not good enough. You can do things which I can't do, and perhaps I can do some which you haven't as yet proved yourself capable of accomplishing. However that may be, this particular part has been cut out for you, and I can do no more with it than make the best of a misfit. Well, I would rather take my chance of passing muster with the public in threadbare old clothes than incur almost certain ridicule by putting on another man's new ones.'

Mr. Moore spoke with some irritation and nervousness. The fact was that his efforts in rehearsal had not been well seconded, the leading lady, especially, having been at little pains to conceal her sense of an incongruity already patent to him.

'I am sure,' he added, 'Miss Fitzwalter will tell you that we have made no progress, and are not likely to make any. Not that I complain of her; only it is very evident to me that she finds it uphill work.'

'Miss Fitzwalter,' observed Shepherd dispassionately, 'is a fine actress, but I should not call her an independent one. I have often noticed that in order to do herself justice she requires a certain stimulus which can only be applied by certain people. She would be all right with you, Dunville, I think.'

'Oh, yes, I daresay she would be all right with me,' Harold agreed, laughing a little.

Whether he would be all right with her (save in the sense of being sure that she would act her very best as his coadjutrix) might be another question. He had wit enough to divine that Lorna had purposely discouraged the uneasy Moore and likewise her motives for so doing. Lorna had doubtless foreseen that what had happened was not at all unlikely to happen. There were moments when he felt half afraid of Lorna, and other moments when he was inclined to believe that she was, after all, about as good a friend as he had in the world. Anyhow, he could not allow excessive prudence to make him waver at this rather critical juncture in his career. He said, after a short pause:

'Well, I'm at your orders, Moore. Of course, it would be no end of a sell for me if the play had to be abandoned now, and of course it's true that the part seems as if it ought to fit me like a glove. How about letting me try my hand at it before you finally decide one way or the other?'

But Mr. Moore did not think that any trial was necessary. His decision, he affirmed, was taken and was final; it rested with Dunville to say whether *Renunciation* should be performed at the St. Martin's Theatre or not.

'I have talked it all over with Shepherd, who knows just what I am prepared to do and who is so kind as to call me accommodating. Perhaps you and he will let me know to-morrow which of two alternatives that I have laid before him you would prefer to adopt. For my own part, I shall be satisfied either way, and I not only wish you and your piece success, but am persuaded that it is assured in advance.'

With that he got up, glancing at his watch and murmuring something about an appointment. His exit had a good deal the air of a preconcerted arrangement, and as soon as he was gone, Harold remarked, smiling:

'Your turn now, Shepherd. Which alternative is it to be? I am to choose, I suppose, between being engaged at a fixed salary and renewing my lease of the theatre, eh?'

Shepherd nodded. 'Yes, that is what Moore suggests—or, to speak more accurately, what I suggested to him—and I am bound to add that I think he is behaving handsomely in the matter. Should the theatre remain under his management, you will be paid at the usual rate and will receive what I consider a fair proportion of the takings as author——'

'Or, rather, my brother will.'

'Oh, your brother? I don't know, I'm sure, about your brother's share; that must be for you and him to settle between you. But as regards the main question, Moore, for many reasons, would rather that you became the lessee once more, and I believe you will consult your own interests best by meeting him there. Both pecuniarily and in the way of prestige, I mean.'

'H'm!—it's a bit of a risk, you know, Shepherd. I can't tell you how much cash I shall have left after I have paid my election expenses, but there will be precious little, I'm afraid. And if we should come to grief over this play——'

'I decline to contemplate contingencies which will not arise, and if ready money is wanted for a few weeks or months, I'll

undertake to find it for you. Don't trouble your head about that. By the way, I ought to have mentioned perhaps that you will have to take me over again as part and parcel of the concern.'

Harold surveyed his friend with that half-deprecating, boyish smile which had helped to win a good many friends for him, male and female. 'Shepherd,' said he, 'do you know that you make me feel rather ashamed of myself?'

'I am glad of that,' returned Shepherd calmly, 'because I think you ought to feel rather ashamed of yourself; though perhaps not for the reason that you have in your mind. Well, you have burnt your fingers, and I shouldn't wonder if you had learnt a lesson or two. Now, I hope, you are going to be justifiably proud of yourself, by way of a change. It isn't every day that the public is privileged to see a man playing in his own piece at his own theatre. Oh, your fortune is made this time, Dunville, you may depend upon it! And I am not much in the habit of prophesying unless I know, am I?'

Harold's experience of his prophecies was, at any rate, that they were invariably fulfilled. In this case, as in other cases, he might be trusted to bring about their fulfilment; perhaps also he might be relied upon both to propitiate and—so far as in him lay—to thwart Lorna Fitzwalter.

That lady required no propitiating, nor, in the first exuberance of her joy at having attained her object, did she behave in such a manner as to excite apprehension.

'Oh, but I didn't!' she declared, some days afterwards, when, on the conclusion of a very successful rehearsal, she was accused of having tried to wreck the piece. 'All I tried to do was to save it from being wrecked by such a fish out of water as Moore was in the part. If you hadn't come back to us, as I hoped all along that you would, I should have done my level best to make your play go without you. You can't say that I have ever been selfish with you, and I hope I never shall be.'

Harold trusted that she never would; for the probability of her altruism being put to the test by-and-by stared him in the face. Meanwhile, he was pleased with her, pleased with the turn that his affairs had taken, pleased above all with himself and with his facile accomplishment of a task somewhat too delicate for Moore's capabilities.

The plot of *Renunciation*, it may here be mentioned, was grounded upon a more or less legendary episode in the history of the Dunville family which had come to Dick's knowledge and had

fired his imagination. The hero of this ill-authenticated romance was one Ralph Dunville, a roystering, duelling, gambling spend-thrift who, in the early years of the eighteenth century, was driven out of the country by debt, by the incurred displeasure of high personages, and, more particularly, by the refusal of his kinsman, at that time the holder of the estates, to have anything more to do with him. So away he went to seek his fortune in Continental warfare, leaving behind him the beautiful and disconsolate daughter of a neighbouring magnate, Mistress Alice Filmer, with whom he had exchanged secret vows from which he now felt in honour bound to release her. Nothing more was heard of him, it would appear, for nearly two years, during which time the childless head of the family died and was succeeded by the heir of entail, named Walter. Now, according to the story, there was in the pedigree of this amiable, gifted, and exceedingly handsome young gentleman (the same who in later life became a member of the Newcastle administration and had his portrait painted by Sir Joshua), a flaw, unknown to him and to his immediate progenitors, but discovered by an elderly relation of his, Peter Dunville, who is stated to have acquired documentary proof thereof. Peter appears to have been a plausible, unscrupulous personage of a type happily more often to be met with in melodrama than in real life. His original idea, presumably, was to sell his information to the innocent and upright Walter, with whom he had ingratiated himself and who, as was not unusual in those days, had acknowledged the claims of consanguinity to the extent of granting him permanent board and lodging. It can only have been conviction of the predestined failure of such an enterprise that led him to open negotiations with Ralph, who, by reason of the aforesaid flaw, became the rightful owner of the Dunville estates. At all events, Ralph returned to England post-haste—returned only to find that the man who had supplanted him in his inheritance had supplanted him also in the affections of Alice Filmer. A bundle of discursive letters, written long after all the persons concerned had quitted earthly scenes, and claiming no authority beyond that of hearsay, supplies material for the conclusion of the romance. These relate how Ralph was hospitably received by the relative whom he was bent upon ousting; how Alice, as soon as her first love reappeared, broke off her engagement to the Lord of the Manor; how the chivalrous soldier of fortune speedily discerned that fidelity to the past was with her a matter of duty, not of inclination, and how he thereupon

determined to abandon his rights for her sake. He is represented as charming in manner, cynical in his professed views of life and conduct, resolved to make things easy for those whom he desired to benefit by persuading them that he in no way merited their esteem. Old Peter and documents which spoke for themselves remained, naturally, to be reckoned with. His first step was to obtain temporary possession of the papers and destroy them; his next was to put a public and quite unexpected affront upon his elderly accomplice which rendered bloodshed inevitable. Then, being a very pretty swordsman, he ran old Peter through the body and quitted England for ever, pursued by the execrations of the reunited lovers, who saw in him only the murderer of one whom they had sincerely loved and respected.

Such, in briefest and baldest outline, was the scaffolding which had served a descendant of Walter Dunville's for the construction of a well-contrived play. He had not found the bare facts—if facts they were—altogether easy to manipulate; he had perceived the necessity, for stage purposes, of taking some liberties with the climax, and he had taken them accordingly; but the character of Ralph he had understood and had presented with a skill which his younger brother was excellently qualified to interpret.

To Harold, indeed, the impersonation of Ralph Dunville was the easiest thing in the world. He had only to be himself in order to do it, and if he paid himself rather too high a compliment when he imagined that, in similar circumstances, he would have behaved exactly as Ralph had done, that in no way marred his imitation of a nature which from so many points of view looked like the counterpart of his own. From the moment that he stepped into Moore's vacated place all went as smoothly as could be desired. His fellow-actors began at once to feel instinctively that they were concerned in a coming triumph and played their several parts with consequent zeal and life; Lorna, who alone amongst them had a somewhat troublesome job to tackle, surpassed herself in dealing with it; Shepherd rubbed his hands and thanked his stars that a certain division of Kent had remained staunch to the Government of the day.

Presently paragraphs, inspired by that capable strategist and provocative of the curiosity of playgoers, found their way into the columns of the newspapers. 'It is whispered that the versatile Mr. Dunville has not suffered his recent unsuccessful excursion into the political arena to interfere with his wooing of the Muses,

and that a play from his pen will ere long be produced at the theatre of which he has once more become the lessee. Should it prove true, as reported, that he has cast himself for the leading part in his own work, critics and audience may anticipate a somewhat unusual treat.' Such, in varying forms, were the announcements communicated to the Press, and an approving grunt was elicited from Anne Dunville when one of them caught her eye.

'Well done, Harold!' she cried, as she handed the paper over to the Rector; 'there's something in him, after all, you know. Pluck, one perceives, and talent, one hopes. Did you know he had written a play?'

'Oh yes, I knew,' answered the real author of the play, looking a little guilty. 'I had a letter from him the other day, saying that he had taken the theatre again and that he expected to make rather a good thing out of this new production.'

That Dick had not yet admitted his sister into his confidence was the result of a queer shyness and diffidence with which she always inspired him. It was very doubtful, he thought, whether a clerical playwright would command Anne's respect or admiration, and he shrank from her irony, which was apt to be of a biting kind. Nor was he disposed just yet to make avowals which might very well await the excuse and sanction of achievement. But with the one person, besides Harold, in whom he had confided he was eager to hold parley, being assured in advance of her sympathy and congratulations. It so happened that he had seen nothing of Lilian since the election; for poor old Mr. Ormond was in bed, paying the penalty of having drunk the new member's health, and when Mr. Ormond was attacked by a good, wholesome fit of gout in the proper quarter nobody except his eldest daughter could approach him with safety. Lilian, therefore, had for some time past been acting as a sick-nurse whose presence within hail of the sufferer was imperative at all hours; so that the Rector walked over to Beechwood that afternoon to make inquiries with only a faint hope of being allowed to exchange words with her.

However, he had the luck to find the invalid progressing favourably, almost free from pain, and inclined for conversation. Having been ushered into the bedroom where his stricken parishioner lay, he lent a patient ear to the long tale of mingled woe and exultation with which he was favoured.

'I do assure you, Dunville, I've been enduring the torments of the d—— well, let us say of the defeated; though we were *not* defeated, thank God! That thought cheered me up in my most

infernal moments. Imagine what it was like? Oh, no, you can't; nobody who hasn't had gout can imagine what it is like! Enough to make a man wish he was dead! Still, as I say, I had the consolation through it all of remembering that we had knocked the stuffing out of that precious brother of yours. And Miss Gardiner has fled the country, I hear. Ha, ha!—so much for him, eh? Serve him right, sir—serve him right! We shall get no more of the light of his countenance in our parts, I take it, and between you and me I doubt whether anybody whom he has left behind him misses him much.'

Lilian, sitting in the background, held her peace. It was impossible to tell by looking at her whether she missed her departed admirer or not, and the deprecating glances which Dick threw in her direction from time to time met with no visible acknowledgment. But, to his great joy, she followed him out of the room on the conclusion of his visit, and the moment that they were alone, he said:

'Well, it's all right about Harold's play. He is going to act in it himself, as I hoped at the first that he would.'

'So I see by the papers,' she answered. 'I don't know why you call it his play, though; I don't know why *he* calls it his play. He has no right to do that.'

'But I told you that, as a favour to me, he had agreed to put his name to it. You speak as if you thought his doing so made him an impostor.'

'Exactly what I do think,' said Lilian.

'Then let me tell you that you are most unfair and unjust to him. The play is really in a great measure his, seeing that he has adapted it for the stage in a way that I couldn't have done, with my lack of practical experience. Moreover, it is a distinct advantage to me that it should not appear anonymously. As for the pecuniary side of the question, he writes to offer me terms which in my opinion are only too liberal.'

'Oh, I don't suspect him of designs upon your pocket,' said Lilian disdainfully; 'there are other kinds of treachery than that.'

No doubt there are, and it was difficult to acquit Harold of treachery in a different relation. Nevertheless, Dick was so afraid of being himself a traitor that he made haste to return: 'I still think that you are rather unfair to him. I don't mean about the play, with regard to which he has simply done what he was asked to do; but——'

'But what?' inquired Lilian, in a tone of voice which

evinced somewhat less respect for her spiritual adviser than usual.

He could not possibly finish his sentence. All he could say—and this he deemed it incumbent upon him to say—was that he felt sure there was nothing in current gossip respecting his brother and Miss Gardiner. 'It was natural that he should be supposed to be paying his addresses to her, as well as to the constituency; but he could hardly help that, and—as your father says, she has fled the country.'

'I wasn't accusing him of infidelity to Josephine,' Lilian returned; 'on the contrary, it seems rather as if she had been faithless to him than as if he had thrown her over. Either way, it is no business of mine.'

There was a suppressed eagerness in Dick's voice which did not preserve him from giving deep offence, as he asked: 'Are you certain of that?'

'Quite certain,' she answered steadily. And after a moment she added, in lower accents, 'I don't think you are very generous.'

Not generous!—when, for the sake of conscience and honesty, he had gone out of his way to espouse his rival's cause! The Reverend Richard Dunville was under the impression that he knew something about women, and indeed if he did not know a good deal about his female parishioners, the fault was not theirs; but the displeasure which was now so legible upon the countenance of one of the least recalcitrant of these puzzled and almost angered him.

'Well, well, I'll say no more; I am sorry if I have said too much,' was his extremely unintelligent rejoinder. And, lest he should be betrayed into further indiscretions, he incontinently took to his heels.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LAURELS AND WILLOWS.

ON Christmas morning, Miss Lilian Ormond received, amongst other seasonable greetings, a letter so charmingly worded, so respectfully affectionate, and so modest in its plea for a corner of her memory, that she could hardly have failed to be touched by it, had she not known that it came from the pen of a skilled comedian. But persons of a simple and direct character, like hers, are protected by their ignorance of the complexities of average human nature

from being imposed upon by those whom they have once ceased to trust, and Harold's plausible missive convinced her of nothing except of his insincerity.

Yet he had never been more sincere in his life than he was when he sat down to indite to the girl whom he loved best a Christmas appeal which, read between the lines (as it was evidently meant to be), amounted to an appeal for pardon and patience. He repeated the substance of what he had said to her by word of mouth on the occasion of their last interview; he alluded to the election and to everything connected with it as a passing episode upon which he looked back with regret, not unmingled with shame. 'What an idiot I was, and what an idiot you must have thought me!' he interjected. Then he went on to speak hopefully of the near future, and of the approach of the day when he should once more be a humble capitalist. His correspondent, in short, was given to understand that he had something to tell her which he was only restrained from uttering forthwith by scruples which did him no discredit. He added that his play was to be produced soon after the new year, that it was likely—so competent judges assured him—to give him a great lift in his profession, and that he would be honoured and overjoyed if the one person whose approval was worth more to him than that of all the critics in London could be present at the first performance.

'Would that be manageable, I wonder? And would you think it worth while? I only venture to mention that there will be a place for you in the box which is reserved for my brother and sister, who are coming up, and that I can answer for their being delighted to take charge of you, if you should care to accompany them.'

Lilian was too indignant at what she considered the impudence of such an invitation to perceive its obvious innocence. How could he dare to suggest her visiting the theatre in the company of his defrauded brother, who might, at any moment, give him away? He must indeed feel sure of having won her love, he must indeed place implicit reliance upon the discretion of his dupe, if he was not afraid to take that risk! But that, after all, was his affair, and he had, as a matter of fact, already been given away. Not, assuredly, in order to spare him possible humiliation would she be absent from a performance which she greatly longed to witness, but for the more prosaic reason that the demands of Mr. Ormond's large family—always painfully heavy at that time of year—precluded her from putting in a request for journey-

money. She tried to console herself by reflecting that perhaps the spectacle of Harold's stolen triumph would have spoilt for her the pleasure of assisting at Dick's unclaimed victory.

Shortly after emerging from church, however, she was accosted by the Rector, whose bright and eager face lent such support to the whispered request he had to make that she could neither pain him by a refusal nor by a renewal of observations which had already brought them within perilous reach of quarrelling. Of course, she would like very much to assist at the first night to which he was looking forward, and if—as he assured her was the case—Anne had set her heart upon being allowed to pay all expenses for this once, it would be churlish, perhaps, to raise objections.

'Between ourselves,' the Rector added, 'I don't mean Anne to be out of pocket; I expect my own pocket to be stuffed full of cheques before long, and then I hope she won't mind my repaying her. But, as she doesn't know what my glittering prospects are, and as I don't want her to be told yet, I am giving her a happy Christmas by accepting her offer. Won't you be equally kind?'

Lilian had a smile and a frown at his service. 'Yes; only I can't understand why Anne should not be told, even if everybody else is to be deceived.'

'Because—oh, well, amongst other reasons, because Anne has a disconcertingly keen sense of incongruity. I believe she does me the honour to cherish a certain admiration for me as a parson; I doubt whether she would be able to bring an unprejudiced judgment to bear upon my merits as a playwright. Let me at least get her to applaud the piece before I make my humble confession.'

Anne was quite predisposed to applaud the piece. A little less inclined, perhaps, to give Lilian an opportunity of appreciating Harold's versatile genius; still she was too good a sister to demur to the wish which Dick had expressed. Accordingly, she confirmed by word of mouth the representations already made on her behalf, and Mr. Ormond, when approached upon the subject, gave a somewhat grudging consent to his daughter's departure on leave of absence for a few days.

'Very kind of you, I'm sure,' the old gentleman growled; 'but I don't see what you want her for, and I don't see why she should want to go. However, I can't deny that she has earned a holiday.'

Thus it came to pass that the audience which, on the occasion of Mr. Harold Dunville's new production, packed the St. Martin's

Theatre from roof to basement, and which adequately represented fashion, letters, art, and contemporary criticism, included three persons who appeared to represent nothing in particular, except themselves—although that, to be sure, may, from various causes, have implied a good deal to the destined hero of the evening.

It was never Harold's habit to play to or at anybody, his histrionic gift consisting precisely in the power that he had to forget, while he was acting, everything but the personality which he had assumed and the fictitious scenes belonging thereto; yet on that evening he was conscious throughout of Lilian's presence and bent upon conveying to her the idea that he had never revealed his true self more clearly than in the character of the ancestor with whom he fancied that he had so much in common. And almost he succeeded. His acting was really fine; his part was one which, in the nature of things, captivated from the outset the sympathies of those who saw and heard him; he dealt with it after a fashion which moved them to alternate laughter and tears. If Lilian, whose pocket-handkerchief was called into frequent requisition, could not help feeling that, in order to play like that, the man must be in some measure what he so convincingly appeared to be, her intuitions may not have been wholly at fault. Who can tell what latent potentialities for good or for evil exist in any of us? Yet when the curtain fell, amidst thunders of applause, on the conclusion of each act, and when the spell was temporarily withdrawn, she reverted obstinately to ascertained facts. Harold Dunville might be this, that, or the other—he was a magnificent actor certainly, and an engaging, lovable being possibly—but that he was an impostor was beyond all doubt or question. Nor was there any longer the least doubt or question in her mind as to whether she herself loved him or not. Precisely because she had loved him once, it had become an altogether impossible thing to her to love him again, and perhaps her distrust of him was rather deepened than diminished by this proof of his power to stir her emotions. Then, too, Dick's enthusiastic, unrestrained delight in his brother's triumph provoked her. Dick was triumphant, Dick was radiant; but not on his own score. He might have been, as he pretended to be, making acquaintance with the play for the first time, so little did he seem to claim any personal share in its immense success.

'Isn't he glorious?—isn't he a real genius?—doesn't he deserve the ovation that is in store for him?'

To such eager ejaculations Anne was fain to respond with

acquiescent nods and smiles, honestly owning that she would never have believed that Harold 'had it in him'; but Lilian contracted her brows and drummed impatiently with her foot. It was right enough to praise an admirable performance, and she was willing to pay her tribute of admiration to a performer who knew so well how to profit by a great opportunity. But who, after all, had furnished him with that opportunity?

'I don't think the author ought to be forgotten,' she could not resist remarking once.

'Bless me! who forgets him?' returned Anne. 'I suppose we all knew that Harold could act: but the amazing thing—at least it's amazing to me—is the knowledge of human nature he must possess to have composed such dialogue. Oh, we are clapping our hands for the author quite as much as for the actor, you may be sure!'

A slight nudge and an imploring glance from Dick closed Lilian's lips; but she promised herself that they should not remain permanently closed. Let Harold speak out soon, if he had the courage and honesty to do so. If not, the task of rendering justice where it was due must be undertaken by somebody else.

Critics more dispassionate than Miss Ormond and more experienced than Anne would probably have pronounced—most of them did, indeed, pronounce in print on the following morning—that it had needed all Mr. Dunville's consummate skill as a comedian to achieve victory with a play which, in other hands, might easily have led to disaster. Miss Fitzwalter, to be sure, had surpassed herself in a somewhat ungrateful part, while the other members of the company had done their very best; but the fact remained that *Renunciation*, although an excellent piece of work, exhibited many of the faults which belong to amateur writers for the stage. With such appreciations, however, the course of this narrative has little to do. A victory is a victory, whether it be won by adherence to recognised rules or bold departure from them, and that Harold proved completely victorious no critic could attempt to deny. In the final scene he fairly brought down the house, which wept over him and adored him as he lay, wounded to death, his head supported by the woman whom he loved, and gasped out his life, with light words upon his lips, laughing to scorn the malicious story of his rascally kinsman. For the author had perceived that, in the interests of poetic justice, he must be made to perish by the sword of the villain, instead of running the latter through the body, that he must die in the presence of those

for whom he had sacrificed all, that he must win their affection and regret, without any suspicion on their part of the truth, and that the villain must be cast out, enraged and discomfited, after a last vain and spiteful effort to wreck their happiness by proclaiming what he could no longer substantiate.

The conclusion, of course, left something to be desired, and did not wholly satisfy the claims of poetic justice, as understood by a public which likes to see everything cleared up before the curtain drops; yet it harmonised aptly enough with a character and a life which had been presented with great dexterity—besides being the only imaginable solution of the imbroglio. No doubt the striking personal beauty of the chief actor was of assistance to him. Seldom did Harold Dunville appear upon the stage without touching some susceptible hearts, and on this occasion it is probable that most of the female spectators were more or less in love with him. One of them, it is true, was not; but her immunity was due to special causes, and even she had to acknowledge to herself that if his actions had been anything like as handsome as his face, her dead sentiment for him would never have died.

When all was over he received an ovation which eclipsed every previous experience of his in that line. Vainly, if chivalrously, did he insist upon drawing Miss Fitzwalter before the curtain with him and compelling her to associate herself with his glory. Recalled again and again, he was at length fain to step forward alone; and then, in response to vociferous demands from the gallery, he resigned himself, with a smile and a slight, deprecating shrug, to the utterance of a few words. These were few, simple, and modest. As a general rule he was averse, he said, to the delivery of speeches by managers or actors, his feeling with regard to that question being that when satisfaction had been given on the one side and expressed on the other, so happy a state of things could not be improved upon by talking about it. He must admit, however, that the present instance was in some respects exceptional, and perhaps he should not be mistaken in assuming that one reason for the very great kindness and generosity with which he had been met was the circumstance that his name happened to figure no less than three times on the playbill of the evening. But let him hasten to confess that that circumstance, though exceptional, added little to such merit as he might be deemed to have displayed. 'I do not know whether it is necessary to mention—to some of you, I am sure, it cannot be

necessary—that the writer of a stage-play is often a rather nebulous, rather incapable personage. Be that as it may, I must not allow you to go away with the idea that *Renunciation* is the product of my own poor brains alone. I am precluded from specifying by name those to whose ability and co-operation I feel that I am indebted for the larger share of your approval; since they prefer to remain in the background, I can only thank you most heartily for them, as well as for myself, and assure you that, without their aid, I should never have been in a position to thank you at all.

This frank avowal, which to nine-tenths of the audience was practically meaningless, and was taken by the remaining tenth as a kindly acknowledgment of Shepherd's technical acumen, delighted the author of *Renunciation*, who rubbed his hands and beamed. That Lilian Ormond considered it shabby and perfidious was the result, it is to be feared, of her feminine inability to accord even bare justice to one who had forfeited her respect. 'He is only trying to make himself safe, in case he should be found out,' she thought; 'I should have liked him better if he had been a bolder thief.'

Her irritation was intensified by Dick's contented acquiescence in the fraud; it was with difficulty that she held her tongue during the drive from the theatre to Ashley Gardens, whither the trio had been bidden to supper by Harold, and when they reached their destination in advance of their host, Anne surveyed her curiously, asking:

'Well, haven't you a word to say?'

'I thought your brother acted very well indeed,' Lilian answered.

'There could hardly be two opinions about his acting. What about his piece, though? I can't pretend to be a judge; but I am free to confess that it seemed to me quite extraordinarily clever.'

'Yes; only he himself told us that it was not really his own piece.'

Anne shrugged her shoulders. 'A sop to some Cerberus or other, I suppose,' she remarked. 'Victorious generals say that sort of thing about their staffs and their subordinates and even about the rank-and-file. It sounds modest, it gives pleasure to some people and it misleads nobody.'

'Your brother's speech didn't mislead *me*, anyhow,' Lilian somewhat imprudently declared.

But at this juncture Dick began to talk rapidly, and in a few minutes Harold arrived, bringing with him Shepherd, Miss Fitzwalter, and several other members of the theatrical company

whom, as he had previously explained, it was impossible for him to exclude from his hospitality on such an occasion. He was in high spirits and a little excited—too excited, perhaps, to be chilled by the formal congratulations with which Lilian encountered him on his approach. If, at the moment, anything caused him misgivings, it was Lorna Fitzwalter's unavoidable presence and only too probable jealousy; but he was resolved that, whatever Lorna might say or do, Lilian should sit on his right hand at the supper-table, and he placed her there, while Lorna, on his left, took quick notes and reached quick conclusions. There is this difference between men and women—that jealousy, which dulls the wits of the former, sharpens those of the latter; and Miss Fitzwalter, speedily perceiving that her opposite neighbour, if wooed, had no desire to be won, behaved quite quietly. She was even a little amused by and a little sorry for her volatile Harold, whose endless flirtations she was wont to view from a standpoint almost motherly, and who was visibly exerting himself to small purpose now.

Oddly enough, he did not himself realise the futility of his exertions. Lilian, to be sure, was not quite like herself; she answered him for the most part in monosyllables and from time to time she fixed upon him a questioning glance which he was somewhat at a loss to interpret. But had she not, after all, some right to look interrogative? Of course she had, and of course she must still entertain doubts which he hoped ere long to dissipate. The verdict of a first night cannot be held absolutely conclusive; but he was persuaded in his own mind that *Renunciation* was in for a splendid run, and he saw in the near future a return of pecuniary prosperity which would justify expressed aspirations. Meanwhile, present conditions seemed to justify some elation. The supper party was a merry one; for everybody was naturally in good humour, and Mr. Shepherd's announcement that he had a toast to propose was received as warmly as if he had named the foreseen subject thereof. Assuredly it was with no equivocal intention that Shepherd asked all present to drink to the health of 'the author of *Renunciation*.' He alluded, of course, to Harold, whom in truth he regarded as for all practical purposes entitled to be so described, and who smilingly accepted the compliment, together with the hearty congratulations by which it was accompanied. Lilian, watched him, saying to herself that now, if ever, must the disclaimer which ordinary honesty demanded be uttered; but no disclaimer came. Harold sat silent and complacent while guests, one after another, raised their glasses to

him ; so that when it came to the turn of his right hand neighbour, she felt that he richly deserved what he was going to get. In a clear and steady voice she said :

‘The health of the author of *Renunciation* ! I mean Mr. Richard Dunville, who is the author—not Mr. Harold Dunville, who isn’t.’

It must be very disconcerting and very disappointing, after flinging a bomb into the midst of a crowded assemblage, to see it sputter into fragments, without so much as the momentarily startling effect of a harmless explosion. If anybody, besides Lillian, was disconcerted during the next few minutes, it was the Reverend Richard, who made haste to declare that honours were, in any case, divided between him and his brother and that, for his own part, he desired, as he had done all along, to preserve his anonymity. Harold was not disconcerted at all. He said, with a good-humoured laugh, that he could not regret Miss Ormond’s having let the cat out of the bag, because he had suffered, all the evening through, from an uncomfortable sensation of sailing under false colours. It was news to him that Miss Ormond had been told of the existence of a cat and a bag ; but he was glad she knew and glad that all his friends in that room now knew. They would easily understand a clergyman’s unwillingness to come before the public as a playwright, and he was sure that they would kindly respect a secret which he himself had not been permitted to divulge. ‘As for what Dick is good enough to assert about divided honours, you needn’t believe a word of it ; it’s a case of *sic vos non vobis*. Only please believe that the writer is the humbug this time, not his very humble and reluctant supplanter.’

Shepherd took leave to demur to the above statement, and so, quite eagerly and volubly, did Dick. According to them, the play was essentially a joint production, and its initiator had contributed little, if anything, to it beyond the raw material. And this view was evidently accepted and participated in by the rest of the company, whose sympathies may, not unnaturally, have been rather with their chief than with the parson. Presently Harold took occasion to whisper to Lillian :

‘Don’t you think you owe me a little bit of an apology ?’

‘No,’ she answered stoutly, ‘I don’t. It is all very plausible ; but I can’t change my mind. I still think that you have no right to strut about in borrowed plumes.’

He only laughed. He only saw that she was vexed with him for not having taken her into his confidence, and only saw in her

vexation a proof that his conduct was not a matter of indifference to her. He knew women and their ways so well ! For the effecting of a reconciliation with this particular woman, however, the occasion did not seem to be very propitious. Other occasions would soon present themselves, or, if not, should be created. For the time being, he was contented to think that his manner of encountering her unexpected onslaught could scarcely have lowered him in her eyes.

His manner, and, still more, Dick's manner, of receiving it had lowered her very considerably in her own esteem. To the lecture which was administered to her by her spiritual adviser, on the homeward drive, she could but submit in mortified silence, conscious of indiscretion and failure, consoled only partially by the grip of Anne's fingers, which closed, after a friendly fashion, upon her own, under cover of darkness. And even Anne's approval, it subsequently appeared, was based upon a strange, unwarrantable misconception.

'Oh, no,' her hostess said, when interrogated in the privacy of the girl's bedroom, 'I am not with you about Harold. I don't think he can fairly be blamed for having consented to a harmless little piece of deception which seems to have been thrust upon him, and I should think it was true enough that he licked the play into shape, though he never could have written it. You ought not to have tried to exhibit him in the light of an unmasked humbug. All the same, I am not going to deny that I am uncommonly glad you did.'

'I don't know why you should be glad that I managed to give offence all round, without convincing anybody,' returned Lilian, ruefully.

The corners of Anne's mouth went down, and her eyes twinkled. 'Would you like to be told why? Probably not. Nevertheless, I must give myself the satisfaction of telling you before I take to my heels. Because, my dear, your behaviour convinced somebody—namely, me—of something which I am more than delighted to know. Much you care whether Harold is a humbug or not ! But you care a great deal about Dick, or you wouldn't be so jealous of his fame. There !—I have said it, and I stick to what I have said ; but I decline further discussion. I leave you to your own heart and your own conscience, which ought to keep you awake for the next half-hour between them, and I'm off to bed.'

(To be continued.)

Modder River.

I.

THE following letter, paraphrased from its original terseness, was written home on the evening after the battle of Modder River. It may claim a place for two reasons, if at all. One is that it is the actual record of what one man, very fortunately situated, saw in a modern battle, and, being accustomed to the pen, could set down. The other is that it emphasises, for the first time in print, the actual moment when all that we might have won was snatched from us by a mistake of our own people, and our advantage was reduced to a bare ousting of the enemy from the ground he had held. Two months ago it might have been written (so far as I know) that all the troopers mentioned in the letter were still alive, for with incredible tenacity Parker lived on till within a few days of the fourth anniversary of the field. Of the rest, three or four became officers, one a warrant officer, and two non-coms. I believe it is still correct to say that they all rank this day at the Modder as their best day in the whole war.

Dear Old Man,—You made me promise that I would in this war write you down the whole of one day's work in a battle. Well, here goes at last—and I may say that a many men may go through a many wars and many battles and not have such a day to write about. There is only one thing short with it from your point of view, and that is that it is not my first battle, nor anything like it. Indeed, it is a pity it is not, for to a youngster it would have been gorgeous to have been loose, as I was yesterday, in a battle where every officer—and nearly every man—was his own general. And, first, I make no doubt you have got it down in this morning's papers as a 'glorious victory.' Well, and in bald truth it was at least a glorious day. Take off your cap to the common soldier, to the company and regimental officer, and thank God you are of the same breed as the men of the Modder. Inkermann was a great day, and there is an endless roll of great days behind the

British soldier. But in those days he could see the men who were slaughtering him and, still more, he could see the men he was slaughtering in return. Here, however, he could only see himself being slaughtered right and left, and could not even tell what to aim at in return. To hang on and rattle like that, then, from morning till long after dark of one of the most blazing days I can remember—we'll, that's magnificent, and, in this case, whether it was war or not was no fault of the regiments engaged. I am remembering that grand climb with the steel at Belmont, and the grim uphill surge at the fight which we of the Guides call Rooilaagte, but which you are to call Graspan in honour of the sailors—and they deserve it. But fine indeed as those two things were, there is more to remember in that long, long thin firing line—miles of flat naked veldt salted with a tenuous streak of khaki, one man deep at many man intervals, with the savagely endless sheet of the bullets driving at it like sleet in winter at home, and the adamant courage that hour on hour stayed—still stayed, and only moved at last to sweep down irresistibly into the river bed and across. It was that long 'staying' that hammered it so deep into one's mind. You good, 'respectable' people at home, who turn the 'common soldier' out of your bars and refuse him room in your theatres, I don't want to go to your heaven, where, as the saying is, 'soldiers and dogs are not admitted.' I am going to look for his corner and get in there if I can.

No, this is not rum or whisky or any other thing out of a cask that is talking. It is the memory of yesterday, when I watched the Ninth Brigade lying down and taking its medicine, and thanked God that I, too, was of the same blood with them, and even their comrade. And not I alone. In our sergeants' mess I am the only man who is not either South African born or long enough in South Africa to be an Africander in spirit. One, the best of us, it was, one born a Free Stater, who said the right thing about it all. Not many minutes ago—this is evening—we had an issue of rum. He gave us a toast. 'Well, fellows, we British Africanders have talked a lot at one time and another of how, when we were ready, we'd take South Africa from England and set up a United States of our own. But, after yesterday, after what we saw yesterday here at the Modder River, no more rot—it was rot—and here's to the British soldier, Tommy Atkins as they call him—the king of all fighting men wherever he may be!' 'You bet!' went up the chorus from all of us.

And the example is so fine in its effect. It makes the raw

irregular wild to prove himself fit to be the comrade of this man that the good people at home hound down as riffraff. I know the effect it had on my fellows yesterday, an effect which for one thing gives me to have such a letter as this to write. This war will last long, and there will be many battles, but I have no hope that I shall ever see so good a day—have such a share in it, I mean—though that, of course, is because I started in with the peculiar luck of being loose with a gang of my own, and that a gang on fire with the memory of what the Regulars had done at Belmont and Graspan, and burning to do something themselves which should cause the men of our infantry to look upon them as fit to be their comrades in the great moments of a battle. Remember that point as the atmosphere of this whole story, and for background never forget the league-long exhibition of grim courage which our army was laying out before men as well as gods—before us, in fact.

Rimington had made me a sergeant in the beginning—by the way, I was close by and saw him do the V.C. act at Rooilaagte, though, as there was no superior officer there to see the thing done, he, of course, won't get it. Well, on the morning when the army started up here from Enslin, the second morning after Graspan, I was detached with a little gang, a dozen all told, to do a little job there. That day finished—quite a gay little day it was, too—I started at dawn yesterday to overtake the army ahead in time for the big fight which we of the Guides expected here.

Overhauling the transport I next headed for the sound of our guns, where they opened far on the right, overlooking the Riet River as it comes winding up to join the wooded Modder. My fellows had been growling and cursing behind my back the whole way, in mortal dread of losing the fight, and trying by a hundred tricks to crowd me into a faster pace. But I had no intention of arriving on the field stone-cold; I wanted mounted men when I got there, not men afoot.

When we got to the guns we found all quiet. They had been sniping at some Boers on the other side of the Riet, but had found that too slow for interest. Things had apparently halted for want of an objective. The cavalry and those resuscitated original Dragoons, the mounted infantry, were knocking about not far off; a line of khaki dots was strung away to our left front to give us track of the infantry. This was all the battle there was going to be, said the men with the limbers.

My fellows grinned. They knew. Too many of Mike Rimington's men had picnicked here at this Modder River, down from

Kimberley in the old days gone by, and on top of that we knew from several sources that here was going to be the great fight on the road to the Diamond City. So we fed our horses quickly, snatching the time 'before hell should turn loose,' as more than one of the men put it.

The horses did not get a full half-feed before the infantry marched into the fence of hell, if a league-long front of rifle din and the weird whine of a solid slant of bullets makes a hell. At that din the guns cocked their khaki snouts towards the Modder, as if looking for a mark, and, 'Where now is old Mike?' called my men to each other, as they hurried off the nosebags and slipped on the bridles again. 'Where is old Mike? We shall lose all the fun!'

'If you fellows will just get mounted,' said I, 'we'll go and look for Rimington. He must be somewhere away on the left.' They swung up in quick time.

To us, as we came up from the south, the field was a great plain, crossed by a line of trees a mile or so in front of us, backed by a long, gaunt-crested line of koppies, big and dark to block the road to Kimberley beyond. Those trees lined the steep banks of the hidden Modder River, where the enemy had laid his lines and dugged his trenches, to wait for us to walk him up—which is to be our game apparently—and there he squatted now, unseen, while our infantry lay out on the flat veldt in front of him, well seen and well dusted, but stubborn.

Now, for us, the field was cut in two by the long embankment of the railway, which came up from the south with our line of march, and disappeared into the trees ahead, to cross the river on a red grid of a bridge there. This embankment cut our army into a right and a left wing, and a right and a left wing battle it therefore remained all day; but that is anticipating.

As I led my troop away to the left along the rear of the infantry, I found that all the crack corps—that is, the guns, the Guards and the Lancers—were on the right of the railway. Therefore, on the left would be only the Ninth Brigade, the newly come Highlanders—and Rimington—somewhere in the air. But before I could cross the railway there was a great dash and dust behind me, and in from the far right careered the battery we had just left. Round and stiffly into line swung the guns; all the pride of a hundred Birthday Parades oozing in every movement. Back went the limbers, down chopped the right arms, belch went the muzzles, and the long tradition of the R.A. was enjoying itself against the bridge and village, though

bullets might moan like a winter storm round the guns, and shell might shower the limbers with dust and sand.

Then, very slow and stately, another and huge cloud of dust from the right; a dust that halted on the flank of the guns; a dust that dropped like a veil and showed the Lancers, with an 'I'll protect you,' air as they looked at the gunners. You could almost feel the gunners stiffening with huffiness at that. Perhaps the battery-men gave an order, perhaps they only glared; in any case that cavalry moved off again to the right, drawing its cloak of dust over its head as it went, still stately. The gunners must have grown an inch at that.

'Come on then,' said I to my little lot, and so I led away to cross the line. Close to the embankment, however, I saw a knot of newspaper men. 'Tell me, some one,' shouted I, 'where Rimington is with the Guides.'

'Oh, you're out of it!' answered one of them, a dark-moustached one. 'Rimington's gone round the left there to get astraddle of the Boer retreat and twist their little tails.'

'Of course! We're out of it now, all right. We've lost the fun!' came the chorus of discontent from flank to flank of my gang.

'All right when you've finished with that row,' said I. 'You've lost the fun, have you? Well, now, wait a bit; you keep close to me and see if we don't have a hand dealt us before the game's over. We may have lost the cream of it—I'd give a deal to be with Rimington myself—but wait till the day's out, and then tell me what you think of the sport. If there's fun going, you shall take the floor with the rest. Come, now, buck up.' I was a little impatient with their impatience, but I could afford a little patience, too, for I could look ahead. I was in command; free, with a roving commando, on the flank of a four-mile battle. I could indeed afford to be patient. No man on the field, below the general, had such a chance of good time as I.

Shaking my commando into line I led away west over the embankment, and from between the railway metals got sight of all our leftward force—the force that was to do the shifting work that day. Next us, here at the railway, lay the newly come Argylls; left of them, and on the left again, stretched the thin line of the Ninth Brigade; Yorkshires, gallant Northumberland, and the half-battalion Loyal North Lanes. So far they stretched and so thinly that the outer flank was overlapped at near range and

hung up in mid-veldt by the line of the trees—the line of the enemy—where the river made a great bend there to the south.

Already the long thin line was growing to be two lines, where the wounded straggled back and lay down to be dressed at the distance where the doctors had met the first of them. Between these two lines then I led, twelve paces interval from man to man, the dust of bullets beneath our feet and the song of bullets above our heads, holding our way westward to that outer flank, bound for adventure—by special request, as I reminded the men before the play was played.

Thicker grew the bullets, moaning from the near bank of the river, whispering from the farther bank; for according to the distance so does the voice of the bullet soften, from the tearing and cracking of the point-blank range to the faintest sigh of the farthest dropping random-fired shot. And ever through it all I held the men at the walk, checking them sharply as to their dressing and interval to keep their minds steady, for I remembered always that they had neither discipline nor long regimental tradition to help them keep their souls quiet. And, too, ever I kept one eye over my right shoulder, watching the firing line where our infantry lay, keen for any stir betokening some special move that would let me in to redeem my promise.

No stir, however; nothing to change our pace or direction till at far length we came to our outmost left, three companies refused in echelon, so that the outermost could hold fast to a scanty elevation, just large enough for the purpose. Beyond this little lift was only the flat, bare veldt, bullet-swept and spitting under the fire from the bend of the river, which here came round and outflanked the spot. 'Halt now, and dismount,' said I. 'We are finished for awhile.'

And here, by the way, is a point for you. You remember the figures the German Staff gave as the percentage of skulkers in battle—thirty odd per cent., wasn't it? Well, in all that long ride behind the firing line of three battalions and a half, I did not see three skulkers, though God knows the ant-hills in some places were thick enough to have tempted any man that way inclined. What price that after two rounds like Belmont and Graspan? But I don't think we get the skulkers. Voluntary enlistment, you know.

The men of this outer company were lying flat as badgers just under the crest of the rise, and as I drew rein, looking for some officer, one who had seemed flatter than the rest lifted his nose from its burrow and yelled to know what we were.

'Rimington's,' bawled I cheerfully back. 'Ah!' shouted he, 'then take your troop down to the river,' waving his hand airily to indicate a mile or so of the trees ahead: 'See if you can't find a crossing for us!'

'Give us another!' cried one of the men behind me. 'Order us to dismount and lie down. You should see us obey orders sometimes, every once in a while—some orders!' I was very careful not to look round for fear of detecting the man.

But I felt a little heat, too, at the foolishness of that suggestion. I looked at the line of trees and I looked at the officer. 'Down there,' said I, 'and the air grey with bullets! That's bald murder! One man might get there—not the troop.'

He looked at me with hesitating lips for a moment, and then, seeming to accept it that I was not to be had so cheaply as that, laid his nose back in its furrow; troubling no more, saying no more; just fixed there to hang on till something should turn up. But that sort of Micawber is worth his weight in emeralds in battle.

I crawled up beside him—remember I wore no stripes, 'What's the particular hairiness just here?' I asked him.

'Those houses and that long turf wall—specially the wall. Boers thick enough there. Made it pretty stuffy here when we first picked 'em up. We've just been hanging on since till some guns turn up. Try my glasses.'

Before trying the glasses, however, I lifted for a cautious glance over the crest. There was a white house and kraal within a few hundred yards in front, this side the river, and beyond them, across the dam and drift of which, as yet, I knew nothing, rose the scattered houses of the skeleton hamlet of Rosmead. Athwart our flank, seen through a long break in the trees, ran the turf wall spoken of, fencing the mealie fields from the road that ran down on the farther bank of the river. This wall ended at another white house which of itself outflanked us, while below it were yet other houses set in orchards and 'lands,' some of them well back from the river. About these last so many horsemen were loitering that I wanted to know what they meant, for they were within range on our left rear, though yet on the other bank.

Lifting, I clapped the glasses on them for a look, and in that instant's action found out how far and how effectually we were outflanked. As if I had given a signal there came a sweep of bullets to warn me flat again, while the man on my right clutched his shoulder with a wailing, 'Ouw!' as though a child cried out.

'Got it!' spoke up a doctor from behind, as though some one had rolled a rabbit over.

I burrowed, too, for more than one curse showed me that the men quite understood who had brought that extra blast upon them. Then turned up one to relieve me of the curses by raising a storm of them for himself till it was seen what he was doing. He was coming from a company out in front on the veldt, stooping under the load of a comrade on his shoulders: a comrade who had been badly hit, and who might bleed to death there unless he could be carried to the doctors, who were busy with a row of wounded laid out at the rear of our rise. Of course, he ought to have been shot for it, but it was magnificent to see him struggling on, though it's not war. He came the nearest way, for his burden was staggeringly heavy, and the nearest way was over the right of our rise. He brought a hurricane upon us, and there on the rise he dropped. I thought he'd got it, but it was only to take breath. Presently he was up with his man again, staggering on again, bringing the blast again. One thought he would be stripped to the bone by that crash of bullets, but he shuffled on, and got his man down to the doctors. 'If you've got any spare V.C.s,' said I, 'there's your man.'

I've made some inquiries since, but the only man who thinks he has heard of the incident calls the hero of it Maddocks, and says he'll get no mention because he's a bad character. So please drink once to the bad characters of the Army, old chap, and remember that I'd seen quite a few fellows bringing wounded out of the line in my ride down; in each case, as in this, the bringers immediately returning to the firing line. I don't say they were all bad characters, though.

'Well,' said I to the officer, 'you're bottled up here all right.'

'Unless we get some guns to shift that wall and that house,' said he.

'And the guns are fast in it on the other side the line,' replied I. 'They've got a regular Long Valley fight on there—only with very real casualties. They'll spare you no guns.'

'We're corked till we get 'em—that's all,' finished he.

'Well, I'll send a man for guns if you like, just to leave no chance untried. And then I'll go down to that river. We've got to know if they're going to cross down there and outflank us. Once they get this ridge here behind you—what then?'

'Majuba!' said he, with a stifled grin.

'Well, perhaps if I go down there and see enough really to

threaten the general with a Majuba, he may try and shift things here, where there is at least a chance of doing something. Here goes.'

First I sent Parker back with the prayer for a couple of guns. Soudan veteran, stoutest heart and happiest looter in all the foreign legion that went to Greece, I knew he would ride straight, and give his message clearly. He went merrily enough on his grey: how should he know the day was to be so bitter for him or ere the play was done? Next I told off Taggart, an old Matabele fighter, to take charge while I should be gone. Then I mounted to ride out.

My plan was to make a long reach to the left and rear, to strike the river half a mile below the horsemen, and then to work up by bush and cover, past any outlying snipers, till I could feel the real right of the Boers, and look for crossing places that either they or we could use. The horse I had for the task was a seven-year-old spoilt colt, a fiend to buck and a devil to stay. I had ridden him first at the battle of Belmont, six days back, where he caught me star-gazing, and bucked me off under fire. At Graspan he had got a thorough scare, when Rimington took thirty of us and opened a jack pot, just in time. And now he was to prove how good an Africander horse can be at need.

As I put him out for the open he had no more than showed nose before the Boers let us have it in a sheaf. Then, either the memory of Graspan or the fright of this scared him to a mad dash that left the storm slashing always behind us as we raced obliquely across. At that rate I should do well, thought I, when suddenly, well out on the ridge, in good open view to the enemy, I plumped on a barb-wire fence. I had one look at it, and all my weight went into the reins, hands and knees and body. Just in time I stopped him; off I swung, and if ever a man cut a barb-wire fence in drill time I did it then, my horse literally hopping in dread behind me the while at the closeness of the bullets. Indeed, he seemed to be glad when I looked at him and just touched him one pat on the crest as I threw the rein back and mounted. In three leaps he was stretched at top speed again, and I thought I had won.

But here I came to the edge of this bench, where it dropped with stiff slope down to the bottom land through which the river cuts its hidden course. As my horse began striding short in the descent I showed as on a skyline to fresh parties of Boers in the river bed, and dropped out of the original fire into one that sounded, if possible, still hotter. It was no use, I could not hope to live across to the trees on the bank just now. I swung short left into a

fold of the bluff, as if I were turning tail to get away. It was well for me that that fold was so near and so well hollowed out.

This would throw them off the scent, thought I. These new Boers had been worked up by the heavy firing to expect me over that skyline. With me out of sight, apparently bolted, their attention would drift somewhere else, and then, when I spurred out again, headlong, I should get such a start before they could lay well upon me that speed might do the rest. I looked over my horse and patted him as I thought it out, and he seemed to want comfort from me. Then to mount and out again.

The plan worked. A wild rush ; a whirl of din and dust, a tense expectancy, and we had reached the cover of some Kaffir huts, and the stretch of bushes that straggled up to them from the river. 'The luck of the scout' had held so far—the first step was won.

Jumping down I led my panting horse by the bridle till I reached the river, and I was glad to feel his nose at my shoulder all the way ; I was glad so good a horse should feel me his friend and helper. At the edge of the steep, tree-clad drop to the river I took a good look up and down the water. Here was no place for crossing ; the Boers must go far down to get across if they were to try a flank attack. The thing now was to find out how far down their force extended.

Cautiously I pushed up the riverside, using the cattle trails through the dense thornbush, and going the more delicately the nearer I came to the never-ceasing crackling of the Mausers. Single shots passing across high over my head showed me that some scattered Boers must be lying opposite on the other bank, but no man discovered me, for the cover was good, and I came, safe and unhurt, to the face of a high dam of rough masonry, which bellied across the stream where the river ran over a chaotic ledge of rock. I had found the right of the enemy ; by the sound of all his rifles he must be holding the high ground above and behind the thicket of trees which rose from the other end of this dam. This drift then, here at the foot of this dam wall, must be usable by infantry or the Boer would not have pitched himself so strongly here. The thing now was to make sure.

Tying my horse to a tree, I swung down under the dam wall. Humanly speaking, it seemed nonsense to expect to get across undetected. But longest odds are surest landed in scouting, and this dam implied so many things that I must make sure. It meant that the waters it held back, deep and mud-bottomed, would extend a certain distance up the river, impassable to either Briton

or Boer. Which, again, pretty certainly meant that just above the head of the pool the river must be shallow enough to cross. It meant that the Boers on this side the river, the Boers who had fired at me in coming, extended no nearer than the head of the pool, since otherwise their retreat would be interfered with. Also the other bank of the pool would only have a thin line of marksmen along it, while the stronger force would be here at the dam to prevent any turning move—or to make one.

When I dropped into the water, I realised at once that we were safe enough from any turning movement by this drift at least. It was all sudden little pools, rocky islets, smooth, steep-sloping channels where the rush of the waters swept me off my feet in a flash, and then came a breadth of reedy mudbanks and black sloughs; alternate sludge, boulders, and bushes. A dozen horsemen might cross here with time, care, and luck, but not any commando strong enough to attempt a flank attack. That point was established, then.

The next thing was to find out what the Boer right was, and how grounded. At the end of the dam I took to the thick bush and crept slowly up till I could scan the level above. I was close enough to make no mistake. Some seventy paces back stood a small white house, with its couple of red-brick outhouses. A low wall of sods enclosed the whole, and houses and enclosure alike were full of Boers. The orchard and garden were thick with them, and a low sod wall, the wall I had looked at from the flank of our infantry, was lined with peering heads and restless rifle barrels. A mass of horses were clumped close behind the orchard, and a few stood behind the buildings themselves to judge by the heads and tails showing. The whole position was a birthday gift for any battery that should have knowledge and range of it. A dozen shells dropped in here would make such a smash as would insure our flank at once. Dropping back and across again—and catching what proved a lucky fall in the mud by the way—I felt as I loosed and mounted my horse once more that real reward of the scout, the elation of knowing that against all odds one has discovered the knowledge which places another move of the game in the hands of the general.

But, having done so much, one must try to complete the work by learning just how far up the pool of the dam extended, which would give an idea as to where the next drift within the Boer front might be, so that one could give the infantry some sort of a mark to charge for when they should move. Pushing up through the trees lining this bank of the pool, I found the cover come to an end

before I could quite make sure of the spot. Should one turn back now? could one turn back so near to finishing the job? Nay, that would be too bad.

A trick alone could do it—a trick did it—an old trick.¹ I put my horse boldly into the open at a walk. My wet khaki was so black with my last fall in the mud that it might well be mistaken for civilian clothing. The Boers would surely imagine me one of their own men, so near as I was, and so simply riding that way. Fifty yards I went; a hundred yards I covered, and then, at last, I got a glimpse of the likely looking spot where the pool ended. Now to get away with the knowledge. For though you jolt the devil himself in the ribs to get your knowledge, it is of not the slightest use till the general has it.

I dared not stretch my horse to a dash for cover again; that would have been the signal for a fire that could not fail to wipe me out, so near as I was to so many rifles. But here beside me, as if to bar my further way up the river, came down the wire fence I had cut in coming, and out in the open, where the wire bent to come in to the river, was an open gate. If I headed quietly along the fence to that gate the Boers might think I only went out there to get through the fence. Once clear of the gate I should have a good two hundred yards law, and a clear veldt for the dash back to the flank of our infantry again. It was my only way.

I put my horse out along the fence at the tripple, the Boer gait, and every length as I went the blood crawled in my back, expecting the smash of a solid crash of bullets. I dared not mend my gait, and it was all a matter now of whether the first man to suspect me would shoot straight or not. Half-way out a bullet came so close to me that I knew some Boer had tried me, even if he had not tried for me; and with that came the grin to my face; the hazard was so near to death, the chances were so fine, that it was ridiculous to funk any longer; it was not worth while either to fear or hope. One had to grin at it all, it would have been so foolish to trouble any more till it had settled itself one way or the other.

When I had come within half-a-dozen lengths of the gate I thought I caught a lull in the firing of the right of the Boers behind me—maybe a fancy—and it struck me somehow that they were waiting what I should do at the gate. I felt that the whole line suspected me now, and a big breath swelled in my lungs; before I let that breath go I should know. My horse, too, felt something—he began to be freshly alive between my knees and to feel the bit

¹ The Boers often used the same trick before the war ended.

with his mouth, ready to be away like a shot if I but leaned in leave to him. That was well. I reached the gate, passed through, strode clear, and then put the horse for home. Down I leaned above his crest. 'Now, chum!' said I.

He had been waiting; he almost went through the girths with one wild bound, and then, as the crash of the Mausers deafened everything with the crackling and tearing of their blast of bullets, he stretched to the race as no deer ever did, frantic to be away. And I sat deep and bent low; I kept a tight rein and a tighter knee, and ever I looked ahead for the place I wished to reach, and ever I thought how well it is that horses keep their feet so surely when they go in headlong panic.

For there was no slip in the good horse between my knees; never a peck or stumble, never so much as the waste of an ear-cock. Faster and faster he went till the wind in my ears deadened the din of the bullets, and I laid one hand along his neck for the sheer rare glory of the ride—it is very good to live such a moment as that. No mere race, no hunt, compares with the dash under fire.

My troop was watching for me as I swept into cover behind the rise. 'Warm enough out there to make you smile a bit,' said Taggart as I dismounted.

'I can remember when it's been not nearly so stuffy,' replied I. 'Where are the guns?'

Parker answered from where he sat by his grey. 'The O.C. guns says it's like our damned impudence. He'll send guns as soon as he finishes over there.'

'De Landre's gone with a second message,' put in Taggart.

'And I'll go with a third,' said I, 'or rather I'll find the general. Keep the fellows here ready till I come back.' Then I mounted again to take my information to the general.

But far as I rode, and closely as I questioned, no man could tell me where the general was. 'He should have been back at the Ganger's Cottage with the naval guns,' said one. 'No; he has gone down yonder—I saw him go,' said another. 'Yes, but that was a while ago—he's shifted since then,' said a third. And at long length the outcome of it all was that I could not find the general, so that I had but wasted time and horseflesh when I went down to the river.

While I was looking for him, though, I dropped across an incident that put a good taste in my mouth. I had decided to try and find Pole-Carew, commanding this left wing, and explain to him, giving him a chance to profit by the information. As I was riding down to look for him I met a young bugler of the Guards Brigade—I am

sorry I did not notice his regiment. He had been sent across from the right some time before to carry word to some one in this left wing to be ready to charge as soon as the signal came. He asked me to tell him where some commanding officer was—in the din I did not catch the name quite—and would I carry the message on at once? ‘Certainly,’ said I; ‘just hang on to my horse here till I come back.’

I was thinking that now, with him to hold my horse, I could go on afoot into the firing line to look for Pole-Carew, as well as to deliver this message. But I’ll not forget how the lad stiffened as he looked back at me. ‘I can go myself on foot,’ said he. ‘I only thought you’d go quicker on a horse; and I’ve been so long looking for him already I might be too late.’ Then he turned his back fair and square on me, and started down into the firing line further along, and by that lad, the smallest possible fraction of our right wing, you may gauge the quality of that half our army that day.

I followed him far enough to ask how long it was since the order had been issued, and understood him to say half an hour. Phew! if that were so, then, at any minute this left wing might rise and charge straight on into the river to clear it with the steel. Such an order would not have been sent only by one lad; others must have carried it as well. It was too late now to think of finding brigadiers or generals. If this infantry were on the point of charging, then all else sank into insignificance. Ordered to carry this river with the bayonet, these men would surely do so, though they might finish too few for further advance. I thought of our outmost left; outflanked as it was, that left must wither out of existence under the fire that would come upon it the moment it showed to charge. And my own troop, it could not stay behind. If it charged with the infantry it would be the first wiped out, that was all. So foolish, so contemptible, a finish for mounted men. Better finish trying to do something with sense in it at least. I would take my men headlong down to the river, by the same line I had already proved, and then, pushing with all haste up to the dam, creep across and up through the trees on the other bank to try what the surprise of a dozen magazine rifles, at seventy paces, could do to disturb the aim of the commando there when it should open on the flank of our charging infantry. We could only get wiped out there trying to help the infantry; we were sure to get wiped out here, going with the infantry. But modern battle is a funny thing, I suppose you

will say, when a dozen men can think they will make some difference in it. It is all the doing of this long-range magazine rifle.

Swiftly as I went back, I was only just in time to disentangle my men and get them mounted. A whisper of the expected charge had reached them, and they had joined the infantry in high glee. They 'groused' stiffly, but I made stiffer remarks, till presently I drew them out and at top speed we started for the river.

I was so wound up with expectancy that I wondered how few bullets greeted us as we pushed into the open, but a look across showed some of the Boers mounting; they had seen the stir along our infantry, and their dread of that infantry when it tipped its line with steel swallowed up all thoughts of lesser things. Those still firing hit none of us as we swept down to the timber, bolting group on group of twos and threes of snipers from the other bank. Swiftly we pushed up to the dam, and swiftly still we crossed it; but the white house was empty; lands and orchard were empty, and yonder towards the railway pressed the Boer right, riding all alight with dread lest the infantry should win the drift at Rosmead, and cut it off.

A load was off my mind. I was well content the Boers should be gone. Heroics are better reading than doing. But come, we would follow. With wary rein we pushed on up the road to Rosmead. Bullets of our own people on the bank we had left, and bullets of snipers out on the veldt to our left were all that troubled us till, at a red house some three or four hundred yards straight out from Rosmead drift, a solitary Boer, whose horse was killed, came out to us, waving a dirty white handkerchief—the first prisoner of the battle. I saved him from my men—for they remembered the white flag at Belmont—and sent him down to give himself up to the infantry, now beginning to cross at the drift.

From here then we turned left, so as to go round the hamlet, clearing the houses in turn of scattered snipers, and finding only one or two badly wounded Boers on the floors to match the killed horses dotting the road between. To be so far in front, however, was naturally to be suspect to our own infantry, crowding out now from the river bank, and their fire at us grew so hot that I detached a man to explain, while I continued on till we reached the last house at the north-west corner of the village, and there drew rein awhile, to watch the infantry until the mingled mass turned and began to head up the open ways parallel to the river. They had the Boer position in flank now. If they were only kept at speed fast enough to get to the railway embankment, north of the bridge, before the

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enemy could line that as a new front, then the battle was won and done.

A little further on, however, as we pushed out to look for something to do, I began to doubt the Boers re-forming along the embankment. I began to see them going away. From the hotels and buildings by the station, something over half a mile north of the bridge, sparse horsemen escorted hurrying waggons, and groups of three horsemen—two men holding a wounded comrade in his saddle between them—crowded away without looking back. These, indeed, were the usual concomitants of all battles; but those—those clusters yonder, heading out west from the railway, and disappearing over a skyline to our left front—what meant they?

Surely that was the crumbling of their defence; surely the Boers were finished on this flank. But their guns—the guns I had heard a little while ago, yonder between me and the embankment—guns silent now this moment past; it must be that they were limbering up for a race away before the dreaded infantry should surge over that slight lift of ground which still hid them. I did not then know of the bridge that lets the road through under the railway, close by where the Boer guns were. I only knew that this troop had begged for adventure, and here was its chance, indeed. Those guns must withdraw across the open here, as soon as the infantry should reach yonder cactus hedge, a matter of minutes now. And if they did so come, if they did—then it was but to move out; to charge out; to dismount every man as close as we could get, and put them to firing into the gun horses at snapping range. Some one team we must entangle, and then, with that grim infantry at their heels, the gunners must melt away and leave the prize to us—‘one to the Guides,’ indeed. We could face old Mike Rimington all right at the finish if we brought him a gun to speak for us.

I laid the plan out before the men, and they listened in quiet till I ended. ‘I promised you some fun, boys, and here’s the change for the promise.’

‘Some fun,’ said Hughie Gordon, first to speak. ‘Oh! we’ll have some fun all right, as soon as the Boers in that battery there find out that we’re not Boers. How close are we behind their guns, and how close in to their centre? So close you daren’t name it to yourself! But I suppose we won’t be happy till we get it. Let’s get it over, then. Fun!’ He could afford to be sarcastic, for danger drew him as sure as a wedding draws a woman.

Swiftly I led out to a spot where we could be readier for the dash. ‘Down, now!’ I shouted, ‘down, and volley into their

horses, there by the station. The more horses you kill or stampede, the more Boers must be killed or taken when the infantry reach them, and the less they'll trouble about defending the guns while they're trying to secure their mounts. I'll hold your horses here at your heels for you, you sha'n't miss your fun !'

The first volley was too high, but the next was answered by a surging and plunging amongst the crowded horses that gave the true range at once. 'Pump it in now,' shouted I.

Merrily they pumped it in, and as they began to see the effect of their work they began to shout and jest, and to be in glee indeed. Horses broke away, the clusters of horsemen began to be greater clusters, and if my fellows forgot how deadly close our infantry must be getting, if they forgot the effect of the infantry, and thought it all their own, well, was I to tell them of that? Not I. I bade them turn their volleys now into the flying groups, and I saw more than one man fall to prove the firing effective. And all this while I kept the tail of one eye over my right shoulder watching for the guns.

Shells were dropping amongst the station buildings; our own guns were upon them then, and it cheered us to watch the work. For our infantry had continued to send bullets at us from the time of their crossing, in spite of continued messages. The guns at least were at no nonsense, thought we. And then, while I sat the saddle there, holding the ten horses, and overlooking the ten men so happy in their moment, I was suddenly aware of a shell coming from behind, high up and swaggering drunkenly as it passed, to pitch just short of the flying horsemen. 'Good the guns!' shouted the men. 'The guns are a bit of all right.'

Then another shell with the same jaunty, disreputable boasting followed overhead, sounding as if the point came sharp and true in line, while the base of it followed in a swirl of rake-helly jeering. And as I looked, it swooped down and coughed up a little volcano, not just beyond the first; not amongst the Boers yonder, but half way back to us. 'Oh, *very* good the guns!' jibed the men. Then, while I sat thinking, 'Whurrish!' came another and plumped not fifty yards in front of us, gasping and rending up a great burst of red and black and brown, flame and smoke and earth, to give us all pause and reminder.

'But, sergeant, they're taking us for Boers,' protested de Landre over his shoulder from where he lay firing.

'Well, you fellows wanted some fun—you're just on having it,' said I. But while I spoke another shell dropped a bare thirty

yards wide of us. 'It is no use; it is time to get on top and come away,' shouted I. 'Quick, now, mount and ride, or the next shell will have us!'

Swift was the word, but while the men seized horse and threw leg over saddle, I took another look at our infantry. The leading companies were within an ace of the crucial position, but that was no help to us; we must get back, and that with speed, even though Major Lambton, with his companies of Northumberlands, farthest on and out, the left front of all the infantry, in fact, had given the word to be ready with the bayonet for the charge that would have swept clear up to the embankment. 'Get away, get away to the red house behind,' I called to the men, and away they went, all but Parker, whose grey had dropped the big-ringed snaffle out of his mouth, and now struggled against retaking it. Between us we re-bitted him, and while we were in the doing of it, for proof of the wisdom of our going, a shell burst just where the men had been lying, and we had to get the dust out of eyes and ears before we mounted to follow the rest.

As we went I shouted to Parker: 'The infantry look like charging. Bring the fellows over from the red house while I go across and find out where we can get a whack in too.'

'That'll be too late,' urged Parker, checking. 'They're going to charge now. Hear them cheering!—that's for the start. Let us two go, or we'll be out of it.'

The cheer checked me, too, and I drew in and looked again. Cheering, indeed, and the men standing up in excited masses. But not to charge, for while I looked, the cough of a bursting shell tore a gap in a cluster of them, and at that the other clusters began to surge away from the stricken group. Another cough and another: a gap, and another gap—the infantry began slowly to sag back towards the drift again, over the ground already won.

Can you believe what had really happened? A battery had come hurrying up by forced march, eager to have a hand in the battle. There was no headquarters to give it an order, to tell it where to go; no one to give it an outline of what was happening. It had dashed in where it saw most promise; it had seen my little party of horsemen. 'Three hundred yards behind the Boer guns and six hundred from their centre—that can't be our people, that must be the enemy!' From the farther bank of the river, from that very rise where our flank had lain so long, the battery had put my little troop out of the veldt. And then, 'What ho! here's another lot of men just showing beyond the trees. What luck! we've

dropped right on swarms of Boers ; let 'em have it, boys !' and so this poor eager battery, for want of a head to the battle, had turned its guns upon our own infantry, just at the crucial moment, and disembowelled it of the charge it was swelling to deliver. Our own guns had saved the Boer guns, and defeated our own infantry, in the very moment of its victory over the enemy.

The pity of it, for had that poor battery but held off another five minutes, Lambton and his men of the Fifth would have been over the rise ; would have found themselves on the flank of the three Boer gunpits by the chapel ; would have rushed in upon the guns, *and found them deserted*, for the Boer gunners had abandoned their pieces for the moment in terror of the oncoming infantry.¹ One five minutes more and the infantry would have broken cover and swarmed up the embankment ; the Boer left beyond would have been mocked out of any possible stand ; the road to Kimberley would have been opened indeed, for the Boers must have suffered so in getting away at that close range that they could hardly have faced things again within a week.

And that, no matter what you may hear, was the moment and the occasion of our missing our mark at Modder River. We might have had so much, we finished with so little.

But I'll write you the rest to-morrow.

A. O. VAUGHAN.

¹ I have since had corroboration of this from the Boers.

(To be continued.)

Mademoiselle and Fräulein.

WHEN Mademoiselle first arrived at Greathaven the season was at its height, and pupils were not lacking; but when the winter came, with the exception of a single weekly engagement, employment had she none. The gloomy waves rolled in upon an almost deserted strand, hotels were practically empty, boarding-houses shut up; only the regular inhabitants of the place remained. Yet, though she had originally intended to migrate to London with many other birds of passage at the end of the summer, though many dreary months would have to be lived through before she could hope to obtain fresh tuitions, Mademoiselle remained a fixture in her tiny attic room, for since coming to Greathaven she had found a friend.

Not an influential one, not even an attractive personality—just a little German Fräulein, middle-aged like herself, poor like herself, lonely like herself. In this loneliness perhaps lay the secret of the affection which had suddenly sprung up between them; the two little solitary souls had drifted together, touched, and become united.

It all began in November on *le Jour des Morts*. Fräulein, who was resident teacher at the school where Mademoiselle had her daily class, encountered the Frenchwoman in the passage, and observed that her eyes were red. Immediately her thoughts flew to the hillside churchyard amid the yellowing woods in the far Fatherland, where it had ever been her custom to carry on this day a wreath of immortelles, inscribed 'To-my-innermost-heart's-beloved father'; and tears rushed to her own kind blue eyes.

'Ach!' she said, and clasped the other by the hand, 'you, too, perhaps, have lost a father?'

'I have lost both—my father and my mother,' said Mademoiselle.

'Your mother, too! Ach! you poor one!' exclaimed Fräulein. 'Aber, you are more unfortunate than I. But my father—my above-all-dearest father!'

Mademoiselle wrung the little bony hand she held, and at the sympathetic pressure Fräulein sobbed, and then, because they were so lonely and so sorry for each other, and because there was no one else who understood in the least what they both were feeling, they fell into each other's arms and vowed friendship. And after that day, though life was just as hard, and the world was just as cold, and they both remained as poor as ever, each had a little warm bright place in her heart wherein the other was installed.

One bitterly cold day Fräulein, breathless after her climb up many flights of stairs, burst into Mademoiselle's lodging. It was her custom to spend a couple of hours with her friend every evening during her own spare time. She found Mademoiselle sitting by the table, huddled up in a variety of wraps, and embracing with either arm a large beer-bottle.

'Jemini! what art thou doing there?' she inquired. 'Is that beer in those bottles that thou art hugging so fondly?'

Mademoiselle's sallow cheek took a deeper tinge.

'But no, but no,' she cried. 'Beer! I would not touch it for the world.'

'Not Lager beer?' interrupted Fräulein incredulously. 'Ah, my dear, Lager beer is not to be spoken of in that tone. There are people who prefer Pilsener, but——'

'But I am not one of them,' put in Mademoiselle with a laugh. 'No, no, give me a good little Piquet. But it is not that either which I have here in these bottles. It is quite simply hot water. I try to warm myself, my dear—without, all the same, very much success.'

With a laugh and a shrug she sent a third bottle rolling over the bare boards from beneath her feet, where it had hitherto lain concealed.

'The worst of it is,' she added, still laughing rather ruefully, 'I can never manage to get them all hot together. I boil the water in my spirit-lamp, and it is so small that by the time the second bottle is hot the first is cold. I have one side frozen, just as the other is getting comfortably warm.'

Fräulein glanced at the grate, of which a summer decoration of cut paper, now very limp and grey, was the only plenishing; but she knew better than to ask why her friend did not have a fire. A world of unspoken sympathy was perceptible in her kind troubled eyes.

'Everyone has her little discomforts,' she said at last, with a great assumption of cheerfulness. 'I, on the contrary, suffer from

too much heat. My room is small, as thou knowest, and I have a fire at night—they make me such a fire, my angel, I nearly suffocate. I could very well do without half the coals that they put on.'

Mademoiselle stiffened visibly.

'Indeed?' she said politely, but distantly, too.

'Ja wohl,' returned Fräulein, with an awkward laugh. 'I often wish that somebody could come with a little bag just to take them away—they are mine, you know; they are certainly mine, since they are put on my fire to burn for me—if somebody were to come with a little bag just to take them away, ach, how pleased I should be! What a kindness it would be! I should then not have to open the window before going to bed.'

'Dost thou open the window before going to bed?' inquired Mademoiselle incredulously.

'Natürlich,' replied Fräulein promptly; adding mentally, 'When the weather is warm enough.'

Mademoiselle pushed aside the bottles and gazed at her friend with a certain dignified severity, and remarked in frigid tones that, as no one was in the least likely ever to come to take Fräulein's coals away, it did not seem worth while to argue about it.

'Of course, of course,' responded Fräulein hastily, 'I only said *if*.'

'Who would do such a thing?' inquired Mademoiselle, still bristling. 'A charwoman, I suppose.'

'No one, no one at all, my little love,' cried Fräulein, in deep confusion. 'Twas a mere foolish thought, prompted by my own selfishness—I am so uncomfortable, dost thou see?'

'Ah!' said Mademoiselle, leaning back in her chair and folding her arms, 'it is a great pity. Thou must talk to the housemaid about it.'

After that Fräulein said no more, and for a day or two Mademoiselle discarded her hot bottles and kept up a brave assumption of being quite indifferent to the cold; but on one occasion her teeth began to chatter in the midst of a most interesting discussion, and Fräulein went home that night full of doughty resolution.

The fireplace in her own narrow room was not indeed so very big, nor did it seem to be unduly filled with coals, yet no sooner had the housemaid withdrawn, after setting a light to the small black pile, than Fräulein went down on her knees on the hearthrug and carefully removed the greater part of the fuel. Such a very, very tiny fire remained that she went to bed a full hour earlier than usual and corrected some twenty-five German exercises from

between the blankets. Her stiffened fingers could hardly feel the pen when, having amended the last pupil's rendering of the exhilarating phrases 'Have you seen the paper-knife of the uncle? No, but I have here the pen-wiper of the aunt,' she gladly laid it aside and blew out her candle.

Next day with a brown-paper parcel hidden beneath her cape and a rapidly beating heart she faced the little Frenchwoman.

Depositing her parcel and taking her friend by both hands she looked her full in the eyes.

'Thou lovest me, my dear one?' she asked tremulously.

'Dost thou ask?' replied Mademoiselle almost with indignation.

'Wilt thou not, then, give me a proof of love? Wilt thou not do me a favour?'

'Anything, anything in the world,' said Mademoiselle eagerly.

'Shut thy eyes, then, and let me have my way.'

'Eh, bien!' said Mademoiselle, smiling and shutting up her eyes.

In a few minutes a fire was crackling in the grate, and at the sound she turned round with a cry.

'Be not angry, be not angry,' pleaded Fräulein, throwing her arms about her. 'It has cost me nothing—not one farthing—and if you knew how I suffer when I think that thou art cold! Are we not as sisters, after all? Is not thy friendship for me great enough to accept as well as to give?'

And then Mademoiselle cried a little and kissed her, and finally drew her chair close to the fender, spreading out her thin hands with such undisguised enjoyment that Fräulein fairly hugged herself.

After this it became a recognised thing that Fräulein should arrive each day with a brown-paper parcel under her arm, that she and her friend should sit toasting themselves over a very small but cheerful fire, and that Fräulein should scuttle home to early bed and Ollendorf with so warm a glow of happiness in her heart that it quite atoned for frozen toes and numb fingers.

One day she burst into Mademoiselle's little room full of excitement.

'I have received a present—a present sent all the way from Germany. A sausage, my dear, which you and I will eat together for tea.'

'Ah!' cried Mademoiselle delightedly; and sprang up to set her spirit-lamp going. 'I have tea here,' she cried, as she bustled to and fro, 'and milk—yes, there is quite milk enough for

two—and I will get some bread in a moment. There still remains some quite fresh butter.’

‘I have brought thee a roll,’ cried Fräulein ecstatically, ‘a German roll, my dear, to do honour to the German sausage. It is fresh, quite hot. Aber, we shall enjoy ourselves!’

Mademoiselle embraced her, set forth plates and cups, milk and sugar, made the tea, and sat down, rubbing her hands.

‘Let us see this famous sausage,’ she cried gleefully. ‘Why, it is a French sausage!’ she exclaimed, as Fräulein hastily undid the paper wrappers and held out the long brown roll. ‘I thought you said it was a German one?’

‘And so, of course, it is,’ returned Fräulein. ‘It comes from Strasburg.’

‘Strasburg may have been taken from us,’ returned Mademoiselle, with some heat—it was a subject on which she felt strongly, for though she spoke the purest Parisian French she was an Alsatian—‘Strasburg may have been taken from us, but that sausage, my dear, is French. Did I not recognise it? Did I not spend my childhood at Strasburg? And how many of these have I not eaten! Germany may claim Strasburg, but the sausage industry is a French industry—and none the worse for that!’

‘My all-dear-one,’ said Fräulein, with a complacent laugh, ‘thou mayst call it that, if thou wilt; but the facts remain the same. Alsace is, and by right should always have been, a province of the Fatherland. If any proof of that were wanting, it could be found in the Strasburg sausage. The French is not by nature a sausage-loving people; the German nation is. Consequently it is very evident that——’

‘I cannot sit still and listen to such nonsense,’ interrupted Mademoiselle. ‘Thou sayest these things to me—me who am an Alsatian! Do I not know my own people? I tell thee our hearts remain French, though we have been robbed of our nationality.’

‘Robbed!’ repeated Fräulein. ‘That is a curious word to use, Laure.’

‘I cannot help it,’ cried Mademoiselle. ‘I am frank, my dear, and I must speak the truth. All the world knows how our people hate the German tongue.’

Fräulein was usually a very temperate person; but her colour rose, and her voice grew shrill as she answered:

‘Excuse me, it is a stupidity that you say there.’

‘You are politeness itself, mein Fräulein,’ returned Mademoiselle.

Both had dropped the familiar *du* by mutual accord.

Fräulein uttered a short laugh.

'I cannot mince my words when the Fatherland is attacked.'

'And I, of course, was foolish to expect you to sympathise with my feelings. You, with the detestable pride of the conqueror, would crush us beneath your heel,' cried Mademoiselle. 'Sympathy—delicacy of sentiment—I was indeed foolish to expect such things in one of your race.'

Fräulein's lip quivered.

'Can you speak thus to me, Laure?' she asked in a trembling voice. 'Can you look me in the face and say you have found me wanting in sympathy?'

Mademoiselle sprang to her feet, her face blazing, her black eyes shooting fire.

'What!' she cried, 'do you dare? Oh, it is odious, odious! Oh, why did I ever degrade myself by accepting benefits from you? If I starve, if I die, I tell you I will repay you to the last farthing.'

Fräulein turned quite pale and rose also.

'I do not understand you, Laure,' she faltered. 'I alluded to no benefits. I—I spoke merely of the friendship which——'

In her agitation she stammered and broke down.

Mademoiselle fixed her with her fiery gaze and pointed at her with a little knobby finger.

'Do not deny it,' she cried; 'do not. You have betrayed yourself. Yes, you were thinking of those coals, those accursed coals.' She rushed to the hearth and began feverishly to rake out the little fire.

'You shall be paid, I say,' she exclaimed at intervals as she hammered on the embers, 'paid to the last mite!'

'If it is possible that you speak in sincerity,' said Fräulein, in a very quavering voice, but with much dignity, 'if you really believe your own words, if you can think me capable of that of which you accuse me, I have nothing to say—there is an end of everything between us.'

'An end indeed!' returned Mademoiselle, still simmering with wrath. 'Would to God there had never been a beginning! I should at least have preserved my self-respect.'

Fräulein put on her battered hat and her worn jacket and muffler in silence and with shaking fingers, and walked to the door with lagging steps. Mademoiselle, without looking at her, continued to scrape and hammer at the coals. The door closed, and Mademoiselle turned round with a start, glanced at the table,

sprang towards it, and was out on the landing just as Fräulein began to descend the second flight.

'Take your abominable sausage!' she cried; and sent the packet flying through the air.

Fräulein started as it fell with a thud at her feet, looked up with a world of reproach in eyes which had grown very pink about the lids, pushed the sausage out of her way with the patched toe of her boot, and continued to descend without a word.

Mademoiselle went back to her bare room and looked round at the blank hearth, the table where lay the untasted remains of the little feast which she had intended to enjoy with her friend, the chair which she had knocked over in her recent outburst—all was desolation and gloom. But wrath swallowed up regret.

'She shall be paid!' she cried, between her clenched teeth—'paid *jusqu'à la dernière obole!*'

And Heaven knows how, by what miracles of pinching and scraping, the money was got together; ten shillings—more indeed, in all probability, than the actual value of Fräulein's daily offering. The postal order was enclosed in an envelope with Mademoiselle's 'Compliments and thanks,' and sent by post, though the two teachers still met every day, passing each other by with a regal salute.

Mademoiselle felt better after she had discharged her obligation; but Fräulein hid the letter away with many tears. She was a foolish little woman—foolish enough, after all that had passed, to groan to herself, as she sat by her fire, at the remembrance of Mademoiselle's icy room.

But the Frenchwoman had her beer-bottles and her triumphant sense of restored self-respect; no doubt she felt quite happy.

One day Fräulein remarked, as she met Mademoiselle in the passage, that the latter's hands were covered with cracked and swollen chilblains—so much so that she evidently could not put on a glove.

Mademoiselle greeted her with a sliding curtsey and went on, but not before she had caught a look of almost piteous consternation in Fräulein's eyes.

On taking her class a few days later Mademoiselle found her pupils engaged in an eager discussion. The German lesson was just over, and Fräulein had passed her in the doorway with averted face.

'Only think,' said one of the children, 'poor Fräulein has been telling us about a German Christmas, and how everyone has a Christmas-tree, even the grown-ups. They make each other presents, and are all so jolly and happy. Do you know,

Mademoiselle, when Fräulein was in the middle of telling us about it, she suddenly began to cry !’

‘Of course she has no one—no one at all—to keep Christmas with,’ said an older girl.

‘*Dictée* number one hundred and seventeen,’ said Mademoiselle, in an odd harsh tone.

But though she assumed a very business-like air, and often reproved her pupils for inattention, her own thoughts wandered frequently from *dictée* number one hundred and seventeen. Do what she would, the girl’s words kept coming back to her: ‘Of course she has no one—no one at all—to keep Christmas with.’ And Germans thought so much of Christmas ; it was a pity that she could not even have her little tree. If they had remained friends, they might have had one between them, with a few oranges and crackers, and five or six tiny tapers ; and Mademoiselle might have given Fräulein that pretty blue necktie, which she had never worn. Fräulein adored blue ; she would have been enchanted. And what a surprise it would have been ! She saw it all. The little feast would, of course, be kept in her room ; Fräulein would utter shrieks of joy, and would come round the table to embrace her. But what use to think of such things ? All that was impossible now ; they could never, never be friends again.

The very next morning a small parcel came by post to Mademoiselle directed in printed characters. Inside was a pair of mittens, beautifully knitted in a fancy stitch, and with cuffs extending a long way down the wrists. Mademoiselle looked at them with an odd expression, and turned them over and over ; finally she put them on. They were very soft and warm, and fitted to a nicety. She sat staring at them with a curious medley of emotions. The sense of injury was still there, lingering resentment, wounded pride. Nevertheless, she could not but remember the dismay with which Fräulein had gazed at her poor swollen hands.

‘She loves me still,’ said Mademoiselle aloud, with a distinct note of exultation in her voice.

Poor Amalie ! After all, she had sent her back the postal order, and could, in consequence, afford to be generous ; she would wear the mittens. And so, instead of passing Fräulein with her usual stately air, she stopped short when next they met and held out her hands in their new coverings.

‘Have I not to thank you for these ?’ she said. ‘Have I not to thank thee ?’ she added, as Fräulein gazed back at her, reddening, uncertain what to say.

‘Ach, meine Liebe !’ ejaculated Fräulein, and fell into her

arms ; and the last remnant of ill-feeling melted away from Mademoiselle's heart as she returned the embrace.

'Ach, how good—how good it is to think that Christmas will not be so desolate, after all,' said Fräulein. 'Ach, mein Herzchen, if thou didst but know how I dreaded it! At least we shall be together.'

'But certainly, my dear,' replied Mademoiselle, with an air of importance. 'I have planned it all. Thou must come to me, and I will make thee a little fête.'

'Aber! thou above-all-most-amiable,' cried Fräulein delightfully; 'thou didst plan it all when we were not even friends?'

'Si, si, ma chérie!' responded Mademoiselle magnanimously, 'we were always friends. A little quarrel no more puts an end to true friendship than a cloud could extinguish the sun. So, then, it is understood we keep Christmas together.'

It was even more difficult to be absorbed in *dictée* number one hundred and eighteen than in its predecessor. Between the sentences which she enunciated with such laborious distinctness Mademoiselle was planning, contriving, calculating her resources. The *fête* must be a real *fête*; she would astonish Amalie.

'What do you ask, my child? Certainly *rivière* is feminine. What else would you expect it to be? *Point et virgule*.' There should be no sausages—certainly no sausages. Perhaps a little pie. Oh! it would be difficult to find money for it all. And so absorbed in prospective managing was Mademoiselle that it was not until several pairs of large round eyes were fixed upon her that she realised it was some time since the class had written the last word.

Who shall say how Mademoiselle did manage to procure funds for her Christmas party? She looked thin and cold and yellow during the preceding days, and a certain brooch which she usually wore unaccountably disappeared. Nevertheless, she made herself look very smart on Christmas Day, and her little room had such a gay and festive appearance that Fräulein fairly gasped when her friend threw open the door. There was a blazing fire, to begin with; the chimney-piece was garnished with a wreath of paper flowers and lighted up with a pair of coloured candles. The table was covered with a spotless cloth and adorned in similar fashion—as much of it, at least, as Fräulein could see, but the greater part of it was hidden from her view by a large open umbrella.

'One moment!' cried Mademoiselle excitedly, as her friend hurried forward. 'Just one moment, my beloved Amalie. I prepare a surprise. Shut thy eyes for a moment.'

Fräulein, with a cackle of delighted anticipation, screwed up her eyes and turned away her head. The scraping of a match was heard, and a moment later the furling of the umbrella.

‘Now thou mayst look!’ cried Mademoiselle jubilantly.

And, lo and behold! there, in the centre of the table, was a tiny tree, all covered with little candles, with oranges and apples fastened to the branches, and at the very top a paper *Christ-kindchen* cut out and coloured by Mademoiselle’s own hands. And at the foot was there not a small parcel with the words ‘To my dearest Amalie’ most legibly written, and was not Mademoiselle herself positively glowing with happiness as she stood by laughing and rubbing her hands? Never, perhaps, had an innocent dream been so completely realised. Fräulein’s shrieks of joy were, however, lacking at first, for the simple reason that the little creature could not utter a sound of any kind. She could only rush at her friend and fold her in her arms, and kiss her on both cheeks. But all at once she found her voice, and then what laughing and crying, what exclamations! And with what triumph did she in her turn produce from under her cape a little bundle carefully enveloped in tissue paper, which, on being unfolded, proved to be a very marvel of a silk blouse! It was of the brightest pink—she knew that Mademoiselle had a weakness for pink—and was tastefully adorned with brown bows. Mademoiselle ecstatically pronounced it to be of the last *chic*, and immediately held it up to her face that her friend might see how well it became her. The effect was, in truth, to make her complexion a shade more lemon-coloured than usual; but Fräulein contemplated her with entire satisfaction, and announced that it suited her to perfection. Mademoiselle declared herself, in tremulous tones, to be quite overcome at Fräulein’s generosity; as a matter of fact, that blouse was a very expensive affair—it had cost rather more than ten shillings. A certain postal order which had been long laid by had been recently cashed with a joyful heart.

So the pair sat down, one on each side of the tree, and Mademoiselle’s good things were duly appreciated; and there was much talk and laughter, and the lop-sided candles seemed to burn more and more brightly, and the little *Christ-kindchen* looked very benign. In the whole of England was merry-making and feasting that blessed Christmas night; but perhaps no corner of it was more cheerful than the garret where the two little aliens rejoiced together.

M. E. FRANCIS.

Pat Magee's Wife.

LIVIN' wid Pat Magee,
 In a cabin fornent the bay,
 Sea in front an' the bog behind,
 Sthretchin' for miles away.
 An' often he comes an' says—
 'Honey,' he says, says he,—
 'Do ye ever repent the day that ye went
 An' married wid Pat Magee?'

There's a bit av a childie now,
 Playin' around the floor,
 Runnin' about wid a laugh an' a shout
 In an' out av the door :
 Mick wid his father's eyes,—
 Bits av the sky for blue,
 An' aich hair av his head like a goulden thread
 An' the voice av his father too.
 An' often he comes an' says—
 'Honey,' he says, says he,—
 Do ye ever repent the day that ye went
 An' married wid Pat Magee?'

Times when the evenin' falls,
 An' the work av the day is done,
 An' the boy's in bed an' the supper spread,
 I sit in the settin' sun,
 An' think av me girlhood's days,
 An' the love that came me way,
 An' the price, the price that a woman pays—
 An' is well content to pay.
 An' I laugh when he comes an' says,—
 'Honey,' he says, says he,—
 'Do ye ever repent the day that ye went
 An' married wid Pat Magee?'

Never be tellin' a man—
All that he'd like to know,
Give him the half av the whole that he wants,
An' he'll love ye the betther so ;
But times I misdoubt he knows,
Nearly as well as me,
That I'll never repent the day that I went
An' married wid Pat Magee.

LENA BARRINGTON.

The Sound of the Desert.

THE Syrian desert between Baghdad and Damascus ; two white tents, a prowling jackal, and a starry sky.

There was a sense of stir in camp ; a rattle of tins and a neighing of animals ; a faint odour of lighted charcoal was wafted in at the tent door. I opened one eye ; X. still slumbered peacefully at the opposite side of the tent. The Armenian cook appeared at the door with a jug of water and a light. 'One o'clock,' he said laconically as he placed them on the ground and retired. The stars were still shining ; my bed was very warm. True, it was one o'clock in Turkish time only, but no Christian ought to be roused at that hour. X. fell out of bed with a determined thump. 'It's late,' she said. I made no response, but knowing from experience that X. was always right, tried to reconstruct my ideas about time, and reconcile the fact that it was late with its being one o'clock in the morning. Besides, if X. ordained that it was late, in another half-hour the tent ropes would be loosened regardless of the stage our toilet had reached, and a falling tent, when one has just got one's back hair into shape, is exasperating, if not damaging. I got up, and just managed to hurl myself through the door, mostly clothed, as the tent collapsed on the ground. X. was already seated cross-legged on a rug outside, holding one blue hand over a few charcoal embers, while she munched a piece of dry bread held in the other. 'You need not think I have eaten all the butter,' she said, 'because there wasn't any.' Satisfied with the explanation, I munched my bread in silence, and swallowed a cup of thick tea ; we had been carrying water for three days, and it was getting opaque.

The stillness of the night which had reigned outside was being invaded by the cries and movements of men ; dark forms flitted about as they watered the animals and adjusted the nosebags for the morning's feed. A horse, impatient of his tether, had broken

loose, and was galloping defiantly round the camp, inspired to further mischief by the methods of his pursuers, whose idea of re-assuming their authority over him was to rush in his direction flourishing whips and uttering piercing cries. All at once he was brought to bay entangled in some tent ropes, and a sudden lull fell on the disturbed atmosphere. The Oriental can work himself into a pitch of excitement which would keep a European in hysterics for several hours, and then suddenly banish the frenzy from his mind and become instantly silent and unconcerned. There seems no half-way stage between excessive noise and an indifferent silence.

But this incident had somewhat awakened the men, and they set to work to pack up the camp; the mules were unloosed and stood about with looks of resignation, as the loads were adjusted on the creaking pack-saddles and secured with ropes. There was a subdued din and confusion without any sense of hurry. 'Allāh! Allāh!' the native cries when he exerts himself in any way; 'Aha! Aha!' he cries with equal ardour, mingled with satisfaction, when his task is accomplished.

And now the last knot has been tied, the last cloak laid across the saddle, and the last ember of the dying charcoal fire has been carefully raked out to light the cigarette, and we straggle slowly out into the gloom, leaving one charred spot and a sardine-tin in the sandy waste.

There had been a suggestion of redness in the gathering light for the last few moments; streaks of silver and bars of gold lined the dusky sky. It is disconcerting to be travelling westwards when one wishes to be aware of a rising sun. I twisted myself round in the saddle, and, leaving my horse to pick his way, advanced backwards. The whole scene was soon a vast glow of colour, the yellow sand of the desert holding and reflecting the brilliant reds and yellows; and now the sun appeared on the horizon line, and slowly rose until the whole disc of fire stood out in glowing magnificence, and then gradually grew paler as he shared his substance with the surrounding sky. The long, straggling line of our caravan, which had looked like a black serpent twisting through a sea of fire, became less black in the growing light, and men and animals assumed individual shapes.

In another half-hour the broad light of day showed the surroundings in their common aspect. I twisted round again in the saddle, and having turned my back on poetry and romance, became only conscious of the temperature of my extremities. The cold was intense; X. and the soldiers were far ahead; the caravan lagged

behind ; I was alone with cold hands and feet. Poets and philosophers have talked of being alone with the sun and the earth ; if ever conditions were favourable for enjoying the sole companionship of these two elements, it might seem to be in the present circumstances. But in the desert one can be more alone even than this, for in some frames of mind no sense of companionship comes to one from the sky and the earth. Cold and implacable, the grim silent desert stretched away in front beyond the realms of space ; the hard blue sky overhead stared into the abyss of Time ; neither offered any link between Nature and man ; there was nothing one could take hold of, no cloud in the sky of which to ask the question, 'Whither ?' no shadow on the earth to which one could say, 'Whence ?' You were thrown back on yourself, were only conscious of your beating heart and a void. The words of a great lover of Nature rose up in my mind : 'There is nothing human in nature. The earth, though loved so dearly, would let you perish on the ground, and neither bring forth food nor water. Burning in the sky, the great sun, of whose company I have been so fond, would merely burn on and make no motion to assist me.' You felt keenly alive in the middle of this cold dead space, and you knew there was something alive in you which demanded something of it ; had you no place in the economy of this silent universe ? Was there no way of making yourself heard or felt ? Is it that the soul of man must be there to make things alive, and you were now crossing earth where no soul of man had crossed before, and therefore all things were dead ? From sheer agony I cried out ; no answering echo followed ; the sound fell flat and dead. The cold heavens stared placidly on, the surface of the earth was unruffled. I drew rein and listened intently : I heard the roar of London streets ; the cry of the newsboy, the milkman's call, the tramp of a million hurrying feet ; I heard the rush of trains and the screech of engines ; I heard a thousand discordant voices in divers tongues where men were struggling and rushing after material ends ; and, dominating all this, infinitely louder and more distinct, making itself heard supreme and all-powerful, filling the great space, in which one had seemed eternally lost, I heard—the Silence of the Desert. Why wish to make oneself heard. Better be still and listen to the voice of silence ; let its words sink into you, and become part of you, and so take some of its quiet and peace back with you into those crowded cities of men.

If there is a link between anything in you and in this grim stretch of barren sand and impassive depth of distant sky, it is the appeal of its silence to the silence in you. It is the material

aspect of silence in its crudest form, appealing to and recognising in you the unspeakable realms of silence which exist in the region you are dimly conscious of beyond your senses. As we pray to the sea for its depth and calm, to the wind for its freedom, to the sun for its light, so we pray to the desert for its silence ; let your nature expand to the width of this horizon, to the height and depth of this sky, and fill it all with the eternity of this silence.

Ask of the sun why it shines, and if there is light in you it will answer ; ask of the wind why it blows, and to fettered and free alike it gives its answer ; ask of the desert why it is silent, and if there is silence in you you need no answer.

Is there any calm for you in the sea until you put it there ? Do you feel any freedom in the wind until you have created it ? But can you, in any mood or in any circumstance, evade the silence of the desert ? Its influence extends alike to those who receive it and those who resent it.

The men who have no region of silence in themselves are under the power of its physical aspect ; to them it is oppressive, wearying, and deadening ; there is an absence of life, a presence of monotony, from which there is no escape. But once we recognise its silence as being of the nature of what we possess in ourselves, the shadow of monotony and oppressiveness is lifted. Can its effect be better described than it is in that fundamental doctrine of Islam, where it almost coincides with the teachings of Christianity in its endeavour to give expression to the truth ? 'Islam,' that is the resignation of our own will to that of one great power ; the effacement of self, the futility of pitting our own will or mind against that of the great silent, all-powerful, inevitable laws of Nature—the Moslem idea of fate and power ; the Christian's blending of his own will with that of the Divine will ; the scientist's recognition of law. You may put it how you will ; are they not but different interpretations of the unseen power, which, silent in itself and only understood in silence, holds supreme sway in moments of silence ; and, when expressed in its physical aspect in these barren places of the earth, appeals through our eyes and ears to the regions in us, beyond these senses, where it exists in its essential condition ?

I rode on. The sun had warmed my left side through, and the right was beginning to thaw ; my shadow, which had been keeping pace with the horse on the right, now began to creep in front as the sun rose higher ; by the time its burning rays poured straight down overhead the fore-shortened shadow seemed to be leading the way along the desert track. In time the heat became almost unbear-

able, and, suddenly awakening to the stern realities of physical discomfort, I brought my whip down on the horse's flank. He leaped, startled, in the air, and then flew after his shadow in a settled gallop; air, of which one had become unconscious, rushed past one's face, and the muffled thud of his hoofs on the sand seemed to measure time and space. I dashed up to X. and stopped dead beside her. She looked round inquiringly. 'Let's eat,' I said. She looked at her watch. 'We have been riding four hours,' she said; 'we might stop at the next good place.' I looked ahead significantly. 'One place looks much the same as another,' I said. 'I think there is a dip in the ground further on,' she answered, 'where we might get a little shelter.' There did seem to be a slight wave in the flat expanse, and we rode on to it; but like all dips in this country, when we arrived at it it did not seem to be there. We had had so much experience in riding after delusive dips that we decided to stop here, and slid off our horses. The cook unpacked the lunch from his saddlebags and placed hard-boiled eggs, biscuits, and dates beside us. He carefully filled a cup with a thick, brown liquid from the bottom of his waterskin. 'Bitdi,' he said, by which expression he conveyed that the fresh water was now finished. Then he and the men retired a few yards and ate their lunch. Nothing was heard but the steady munch of human jaws; then the men stretched themselves on the sand, and absolute silence reigned, broken by occasional snores. We too lay back, each concealed from the other, under two huge umbrellas, which seemed rather to focus the sun's rays than shade them from us.

When one was alone the desert had seemed full of unqualified silence; the company of others made the silence seem even greater, for the slight sounds which there were made one more conscious of the sound which was not. The clank of the horses' bits, the quiet breathing of one's companions, the stir of a foot, made one realise the intensity of the silence of the whole vast expanse. The far-off tinkling of the mule bells in the approaching caravan gave one a sense of distance such as would hardly have been experienced by simply gazing at an unapproachable horizon. The heat and the slight fatigue added a feeling of drowsiness which made even the solid things around one seem shadowy and distant. It was a waking sleep; one's senses were numb because of the absence of anything to call them into play, though one might 'see, hear, feel, outside the senses.' Just as one may be alone in a London street one may live in a whirl in the desert; the throb of humanity—X.'s umbrella shut with a bang. 'Wake up! the caravan is coming.'

A cloud of dust, a stamping of animals, a shouting of men, and we were off once more. It was our habit to keep pace with the camp in the latter half of the day, and for the next three hours we dawdled along at caravan pace. It was a motley crew. The muleteers trudge along behind the laden animals, taking turns on the back of a patient, sorrowful donkey, on which they ride sideways with dangling legs, pricking its side with a long needle, the secondary object of which was the repairing of broken straps. The pack-mules go doggedly on in front, jostling one another with their unwieldy loads. Occasionally one gets off the track and wanders aside, only to be urged back into line with yells and blows; another stops dead, feeling its load slip round sideways; the men rush at it with shouts of 'Allah! Allah!' the load is shoved up and the ropes tightened; there is a general din of shouting and swearing and jangling of bells. And above it all the disdainful camel moves deliberately on, with measured step and arched neck, unmindful of the petty skirmishes so far below it; its owner, infected by its spirit, rocking on the top, surveys the whole scene with a dejected, uninterested air. Bringing up the rear, motionless and erect on small donkeys, ride one or two older Arabs, wrapped in long sheepskin cloaks, their faces entirely concealed in the folds of a kafiyeh, save where two stern and solemn eyes gaze unceasingly at you with expressionless imperturbability. Wild sons of the desert, product of this eternal silence, are you so much a part of it that you are unconscious of its power?

The only gay and careless element is introduced by the Turkish soldiers. Mounted on splendid Arab mares, they ride in front, sometimes dashing ahead at a wild gallop, holding out their rifles at arm's length, then wheeling suddenly round, and coming to a dead stop in front of an imaginary enemy, upright in their stirrups; in their more subdued moments they break into song with the mournful Eastern refrains.

And so, forming one small world of our own, we 'follow and follow the journeying sun,' and as it sinks lower on the horizon and its fierce rays cease to beat pitilessly down on the parched ground and thirsty animals, a silence falls on the moving band. The spirit of the desert again holds sway. The men cease quarrelling, the animals' heads sink lower, the donkey looks more resigned, the mule more dogged, the camel more superior, the silent Arab more stern and forbidding; the soldier hums where he sang before. Then at last the walls of a solitary guardhouse heave in sight; the men hail it with joyful cries, the soldiers dash ahead, the pack-animals

prick their ears and quicken their steps to an amble. There is a general rush and tumble, culminating in a dead halt on the ground which has formed the place for caravans since caravans crossed the desert. All is noise and confusion ; the loads are unloosed, and fall in promiscuous heaps amongst the medley of animals, who, released of their burdens, roll over on their backs, kicking up the dust. A line of men draw water from the well, pulling at a squeaking chain and invoking the aid of Allah in chorus as they pull. A fight is going on in one corner ; men are knocking each other down, encouraged by a circle of yelling spectators ; the din of excited, quarrelling voices, the hammering of tent-pegs, dominates everything, broken at times by the sudden neigh of a horse bitten by its neighbour, or the harsh, imperious cry of the camel for its supper ; and in the middle of it all the Turkish soldier spreads his cloak upon the ground, turns his face to Mecca, and offers up his murmured prayer to Allah, the one restful form in this scene of chaos.

'Allah Akbar' (God is great) prays this son of Islam, and with his hands upon his knees he bows his head. 'Subhana 'llah' (I praise God), and he falls upon his knees ; 'Allah Akbar' (God is great), and he bows his head to touch the earth. 'Subhana 'llah, subhana 'llah, subhana 'llah,' and he sits upon his heels ; 'Allah Akbar,' and he again prostrates himself ; 'Allah Akbar, subhana 'llah.'

And on this scene the sun casts his final rays of gold and red. As the shades of night draw in quiet reigns once more ; the men collect round the blazing camp fire, and in its light we see the outlines of their dark forms seated, cross-legged, as they eat out of the common bowl or take turns at the bubbling nargheli ; at one side the mules are tethered in two lines, forming a half-square ; a muleteer is grooming them, and one hears the rattle of his scraper and the ever-tinkling bell. The cook is stirring our evening meal in a pot on the fire outside our tent. And now Hassan has brought our rugs and spread them on the ground ; we lie down, and he covers us over with his sheepskin cloak. 'Rahat' (rest), he says, and lifts his hands over us as if pronouncing a blessing. Then he sits down beside us and lights a cigarette. 'Bourda ehe' he goes on, describing the universe with a sweep of his hand. 'Kimse yok' (it is well here—there is no one). 'Is Allah here ?' asks X. 'Allah is here,' he answers with simple reverence ; 'Allah is everywhere,' and we all lie motionless under the stars, unwilling to probe the silence by the sound of uttered thoughts. The murmur of the men's voices gradually dies away as, one by one, they doze off ; a

jackal cries in the distance ; a star falls down to earth. The day is over, and in this land of the Oriental there is no thought of the morrow.

The passive silence of sleep, the active silence of communing souls, the silence of night—all fitful expressions of the one great silence brooding over all, be one asleep or awake, by night and by day, in desert places and in busy haunts of men.

LOUISA JEBB.

A Wherry Elopement.

THE Norfolk marshland lay warm and bright in the glow of the July sun. From time to time clouds, swept by a strong breeze across the sky, made lines of shadow on the green reed-beds, chasing one another across the marshes, taking the colour from the yellow cornfields, till at last they topped the sandhills and disappeared from sight across the sea.

A wherry, with her black sail hoisted and ready to start, lay moored to the bank of the long, straight cutting that connects Somerton Broad with the village of that name. The mast and sail swayed in the breeze, and the yellow painted blocks creaked and groaned as the sail, wind-driven, tugged at the ropes.

On the hatchway aft sat Jacob Gooden, his face turned in the direction of a thatched, lean-to cottage some five hundred yards away, listening intently to the sound of angry voices coming from the back windows of the cottage that looked on to the Cut. A girl's treble, now beseeching, now indignant, now angry, now frightened, was drowned in the forcible bass of an infuriated man.

'Just listen ter him, old Terrifier Trumper be wholly agoing inter it t'arternune,' Jacob muttered. 'Me and my wherry ha' been fit ter start this tew hour and he hain't left off ter catch his breath hardly all th' time. Terrifier may be yar name; I'd terrify yer, yer old warmen, if yer belonged ter my family, I would.'

This remark was addressed to no particular listener, but an old man, with a scythe across his shoulder, ambling along the bank, stopped in front of the wherry-man, jerked his pipe to the extreme corner of his mouth, and, after spitting in the water, looked at Jacob and remarked slowly:

'Would yer? Well, in course yer might ha' a try, young feller, but ter right-side old Terrifier and lay him out proper-like 'ud take a deal o' dewing. It hain't never been done in th' past,

and 'tain't likely as 't will be done in th' future, lessways not by one man, nor tew, either, that's ter say in fair fight and no favour, as th' sayen' go. Lots on 'em like yer ha' *thought* they could '— here the old man took his pipe from his mouth and waved it in the air to emphasise his words—'but dewen' on it be another matters. He be a masterpiece, he be. Pity he worn't trained as a fighten' man, he'd ha' made his fortune—and I'd ha' made mine,' he added with a sigh, 'a folleren' of him and abacken' of him; th' money 'ud ha' come in a deal easier nor cutten' mash-litter. I would ha' had him go and try years ago!'

'Pity he didn't take yar advice instead o' stoppen' at home and wallopen' of his daughters,' said Jacob.

'So 'tis, so 'tis, cos there ain't no money in it, as I ha' told him times enow, but he never would listen to no one. Still he's a grand man,' and the old marshman dwelt lingeringly on the word 'grand' to heighten Jacob's appreciation of the specimen under discussion.

But Jacob's attention had wandered from the speaker and was fixed on the wherry that lay alongside the cottage. Her sail was half up; the gaff running at an angle from midway up the mast to the centre of the cabin top; the canvas caught up in graceful folds by several pieces of rope. The wherry's white bows glistened in the sunlight, and tiny waves of broken blue water lapped against her sides, trying to keep time with the angry altercation raging inside the house. Jacob compared her point by point with the craft he was on, hardly to the advantage of his own possession. His wherry was wet and shining from a recent application of the mop lying at his feet, on which, all unconsciously, he continued to wipe his boots. The red paint on the hatchways shone like sealing-wax, and the white mast stanchions, decorated with green stars, looked as if they had just left the painter's hand. The long quants, lying neat and straight along the sides of the bow, with their butt ends overhanging the water, made points of vantage for the sunbeams' play. Painted on the forepart of the hatchway, on either side the mast, in letters of emerald green on a yellow background, was the name of the wherry, the *Come and Catch Me*, and 'Beccles,' her port.

The old man pointed in the direction of the cottage. 'Ever seed him with his shirt off?' he asked, breaking in on Jacob's ruminations.

'No, I hain't, and I don't want tew. I don't know th' man, except by sight. I be a stranger down this river.'

'Ah! lots o' folk ha' give a shillen' ter see his chest afore now,' went on the old man, ignoring Jacob's scorn. 'And it be worth it tew; lor! it be as broad as one o' th' hatchways o' yar wherry and about th' same colour. In course he be gotten' past his prime now, more's th' pity, still it be a grand frame—a grand frame.'

'What dew he want ter mob and knock his womenfolk about for?' asked Jacob.

'His daughter yer means. He ha' but one at home now; th' tew eldest mawthers took off last year, so there be only a gal about seventeen year old left. She'll sune be clearen' out, I expect. Mawthers like them don't fare ter sense a man like th' Terrifier; he want a deal o' humouren' with a constitution like he ha' got.'

'I should just think he dew,' said Jacob, looking anxiously towards the house whence screams were issuing. 'I wish my mate 'ud hurry hisself and get aboard, that there blaren' kind o' upset my stummick. Dang that chap o' mine! I'll give him th' sack come Saturday night, he ha' been drunk all this mune; I reckon he ha' drawn inter Bell, up th' street, and he'll lay there for all time.'

Before the old man could answer the door of the distant cottage was flung open and a young girl, with fair hair flying in the wind and dress in much disorder, fled shrieking down the road, a big, burly man, strap in hand, shouting and swearing, in hot pursuit. The girl was as agile as a deer, turning and twisting out of reach of the strap, and gradually she distanced her pursuer as she raced along the dyke-wall in the direction of Jacob's wherry. The chase interested the wherry-man, and he sprang to his cabin-top, eagerly following the fortunes of the runners.

'Keep yer adewen'. He on't get nigh yer. Dew yer come aboard here, young woman,' he shouted to the girl. Hastily he began to let go the sheet. The girl was but thirty or forty yards from the boat, gaining on her father every second.

'Dew yer let go my mooren' for'ard,' Jacob called out to the old man. The girl sprang aboard, and as she did so he slipped his mooring aft, put his back to the tiller, and took a vigorous pull at the sheet. The wherry's sail filled, and she gently left the bank and glided up the dyke.

Then began a wordy contention between Jacob and the girl's father, who, purple with rage and much out of breath, shook an impotent fist at his escaping victim.

'Yer think yer ha' got off th' soling, dew yer? Yar wrong. Yer shall ha' it double for this, I promise yer. Dew yer wait. And as for yer,' pointing angrily at Jacob, 'I'll break every bone in yar carcase, see if I don't; I'll pound yer inter malt, my beauty.'

And Jacob, whose wherry, gathering weigh, was fast putting a distance between the speakers, shouted derisively:

'Gude on yer, bor! Mind yer don't bust yarself!'

Baffled in his attempt to repossess himself of his daughter, Terrifier, shouting 'Joe, Joe!' ran as fast as his breath would allow to his wherry and began to crank up the sail. The windlass shrieked when the man, bringing all his vast strength into play, whirled the cog-wheels round. The sail flew up the mast. A voice answered the shouts of 'Joe!' and a dirty individual, with long mouse-coloured hair, appeared from a shed and threw himself aboard. In a few minutes all was in order, and the Terrifier and his man had started in pursuit.

The dyke leading on to the broad is a shallow one, and the mud stirred up by the *Come and Catch Me* impeded her progress. The girl noticed this at once, and without speaking seized one of the quants and, putting her shoulder to the butt end, began to shove, the quant bending with the force she used.

'Why, yer quant as gude as any man, danged if yer don't,' exclaimed Jacob, carefully watching her movements.

'We want ter get out o' here as fast as we can,' was the reply. 'I see Father ha' cranked his sail up, he'll sune be arter us. Th' *Heron* be one o' th' fastest wherries in Norfolk, wins all th' races at regattas. If he catch me now he'll murder me.' The girl shuddered.

'Well! he'll ha' ter settle along o' me fust,' said Jacob stoutly.

'He'd dew that sune enow. Not as how yer ain't a plucked 'un, bor, or yer'd never ha' took me off like this here. But yer don't know my father, there ain't anyone like him in these parts, or in any others, as I ha' heerd tell on.' There was a note of grudging admiration in her tone as she added: 'Why, they calls him th' Terrifier!'

'And what dew they call yer?' asked Jacob.

'My name be Gertrude Trumper; Trudy, I be called for short. There, she'll go now,' said Trudy, for the wherry, getting into deeper water, was beginning to gather speed. The girl put down her quant, and, seating herself on the aft hatches, laid her head in

her hands and burst into tears. She had kept up bravely as long as there was work to do, but now, in the reaction of leisure, she broke down, much to Jacob's discomfort.

'Don't yer take on like that, my gal,' he said sympathetically. 'I'll get yer out of this here muddle, see if I don't; th' *Come and Catch Me* be a fair sailen' wherry, though she mayn't be as gude as th' *Heron*. Blast me, but we ha' got a gude start, and if I can get yer ter Yarmouth maybe yer knows someone as'll look arter yer. No?' in answer to the girl's shake of her head. 'Oh, well, sussen'll tarn up. I'll pay for yer ter go ter Lunnon out o' harm's way. Dew yer give over cryen.'

Trudy lifted her tear-stained face to her comforter and tried to smile, but she cast a look of fear at the *Heron*, foaming along some half-a-mile behind. 'She be wholly acomen,' she cried out; 'she ha' got more breeze nor us. Oh! blow, blow, blow!' she shouted to the heavens. Jacob looked at the sky; above was clear, but down on the western horizon fantastically shaped clouds, purple below, with rounded, whitened tops, were spreading themselves towards the sun.

'There'll be plenty o' wind out o' them clouds sune,' he said, pointing across the great expanse of marshland. 'Tew much, may-be. That look like a storm acomen', 'twill blow a hurricane if th' wind backs ter th' sun.'

Trudy had seated herself in the stern of the wherry, and Jacob, standing before her, drew from her some of her sad story. Her mother had died when she was ten years old, and her two elder sisters had run away from the bad treatment to which the father had subjected them. Since then she had been left alone at the mercy of his ungovernable temper, a slip of a girl, wholly unfit to grapple with the madness which fell on the strong man when things went contrary to his wishes. He had always kept a cane with which to serve out correction; lately he had used a strap, thinking it more efficacious. The cause of his last outbreak had been the loss of a bill of lading, attributed by him to his daughter's carelessness.

'I can put up with th' stick, though my shoulders be all wales,' said Trudy, clenching and unclenching her fists. 'But the strap, that's more nor anyone can dew with.'

'I should think so, and on a grown young woman like yarself! Why, yer'll sune be out o' yar teens, won't yer?' Jacob asked.

'I wor seventeen yesterday, and I had wholly made up my

mind-ter run away last time he beat me and go out ter sarvice, but he keep such a sharp eye on me I hain't had no chance adewen' on it. He make me go on th' wherry and work for him like a man. Oh, it ha' been a life and no 'mistake!' and the tears began again to trickle down her cheeks.

This time Jacob offered no words of comfort. The sudden manner in which Trudy Trumper's company had been thrust upon him, together with the excitement of getting all possible speed out of the *Come and Catch Me*, had, for the time, banished all thought of the seriousness of the situation from his mind. But now the girl's eyes, softened with tears, her cheeks glowing with exertion, her heaving bosom and her fair hair, sun-burnished, falling about her shoulders—little rings, caught by the breeze, flicking her face—appealed to Jacob as a man, rather than as a rescuer, and with the appeal the gravity of his high-handed action was brought home to him. So absorbed was he in the problem that for a moment he neglected the wherry, sailing her easily, till his contemplations were dispelled by Trudy's exclamation :

'Oh, dew pull on yar sheet, she'll go nigher inter wind than what she be adewen'. Yer won't get through this next reach if yer don't, and th' *Heron* be gainen' on us every minute; she'll catch us afore we gets ter Martham ferry-boat. Oh, dew dew yar best,' she pleaded; 'if he catch me now, 'twill be wus than ever; he'll flay me alive with his strap. Oh, I wish I hadn't come, I dew; he'll kill yer for a sartenty, and that'll be all my dewen'.'

'Hold yer on, my gude gal, don't yer chuck up th' sponge, we ain't done yet,' and Jacob took such a vigorous pull at his sheet that the craft shot through the next reach, nearly head to wind. 'That wor a gude nip,' he exclaimed excitedly, the next bend in the river having given him a better slant of wind. 'She be a gude little wherry, 'specially when she be light; there ain't many as 'ud ha' gone through there like that. Dang me,' he shouted, 'but that there wherry o' yar father's ha' done it tew, she be slushen' along suffen'; that won't dew ter go on ter Potter, he'll catch us afore we can lower and go through th' bridge. I'll run on ter Hickling, 'tis our only chance.'

Suiting the action to the words he put his back to the tiller, and, thrusting his feet against the stern-sheets, forced the rudder over. The wherry flew round, the sail coming over with such a jerk that it was only Jacob's restraining arm that saved Trudy from being flung overboard. Jacob let his arm lie round her

waist for a minute, and, though his mind was set on the difficult task of keeping the wherry in her course, he was conscious that the girl felt as warm and as soft as a kitten.

'Fancy usen' a strap on one like her,' he muttered; but a sudden gust, which laid the wherry over, put an end to all sentimentality, and he shouted: 'Slack off a bit, Trudy, slack, or we'll take th' mask out on her.'

The workmanlike manner in which the girl handled the thick rope, letting it slide gently off the cleet and then making a half turn to save it from slipping, surprised the man. For a time he forgot it was a woman to whom he was giving orders, only the sight of the red marks the rope had left on her hands reminded him of her sex.

'Lor, yer be a proper mawther,' he cried admiringly. 'Yer'd make a second hand on a wherry along o' anyone, danged if yer wouldn't. Bless th' girl, yer be a masterpiece. I wor going ter give my mate th' sack, for he be half a fule and allus slushen' th' baar inter him, and I ha' left him behind up at Somerton. Yer can ha' th' crib if yer like.'

'For this trip,' laughed Trudy.

The reply made Jacob's blood mount to his cheeks. 'In course for this trip,' he stammered. 'But, but——' Trudy looked him in the face and the words died on his lips. His eyes wandered to the peak of the sail, then scanned the heavens for the approaching storm, and for the next few minutes not a word was spoken.

The *Come and Catch Me* was now roaring up the narrow Kendal dyke, dipping her side into the water each time a gust laid the sail over, shooting forwards as the mast straightened, and throwing the water from her plankways like a small mill sluice. On either side of the bank a large wave curled and raced after her, laying the tall reeds almost flat upon the water, and the empty bottles and cans, relics of yachtsmen's meals, suddenly became animated and started a rush down stream, only to be caught by the wave and flung up high on the banks.

But if the little wherry was doing her best, the *Heron* was being crammed along for all she was worth. She was partially loaded and lower in the water, and she made the noise of a train as she drove through it, close on the wake of the *Come and Catch Me*, her enormous black sail bellying tight with the wind and standing nearly upright, only the peak of it bending to the breeze. Terrifier's immense arms kept her as straight as a dart, and he

smiled grimly as he looked at the black cloud spreading across the marshes, out of which lightning flashed and lost itself on the low horizon. A gust of greater violence struck both craft, the *Heron* churned the water with increased speed, but Jacob's wherry lay right over, and in her side and rounded bottom the lightning was reflected.

'Slack, slack,' he cried. 'Tis a roger.'

The ropes burnt into the girl's flesh as she let them run through the blocks. 'If yer hadn't let go when I told yer, her mask 'ud ha' gone,' he gasped, hauling in the sheet again. 'That wor a near 'un and no mistake.'

Trudy's face was set and very white. 'Th' *Heron* be nearly atop on us, she be only twenty yards off,' she cried.

Jacob cast a hurried glance over his shoulder. 'Don't think as how she'll catch us afore we are out o' th' Sounds. Once on th' broad I can dew him, yer'll see; I ha' got a trick left, if only we can get there.' Further speech was lost in the crash of the thunder, and the rain, driving across the marshes in steaming clouds, blurred for the moment the *Heron's* sail. The rain lashed the water around them, jumping on the hatchways a foot high, it poured from the sail, and every block and rope took on the manner of a leaking water-trough. In a moment the man and woman were soaked to the skin. But still amid the rain and wind that swept across the flat country, shaking her sail till the noise of her trembling topped the thunder, the wherry sped on, ploughing the water, straining at her ropes, so that on the arms of the wherry-man and the girl the veins stood out to bursting point. They were fast approaching Hickling Broad, and in a few moments the great sheet of water, black and angry in the storm, loomed up in front of their bow.

'Thank Gawd!' Jacob exclaimed as the banks of the Sounds disappeared to view. 'Now we ha' got some room ter move in.'

As the rain eased off they could see that the *Heron* was but ten yards behind them and fast closing up this short space. The Terrifier held a piece of rope in his hand and waved it threateningly at his daughter.

'I'll cut right through yar stern and sink yer,' he shouted to Jacob, making his voice heard above the roar of the storm. 'Joe, dew yer drop th' end o' that quant on th' top o' his skull.'

At his master's bidding the man crept forward on the windward side. He took up the quant ready to carry out the order at

the earliest opportunity. Terrifier continued to shout out oaths and threats.

'I'll pay yer, Trudy, as yer ha' never been paid afore. Next time that blow I can hit 'em, so be yer ready with that there quant, Joe; give him th' darty end on th' top o' his skull as hard as yer can drop it.'

The wherries raced on, the great posts that mark the channel passing as telegraph poles pass a railway carriage, and the ten yards became eight and Joe was almost within striking distance. Trudy cowered in front of Jacob, waiting for the crash which she knew would come when the *Heron* hit them. She turned towards him a white, scared face, and said in a whisper:

'Jacob, forgive me for getten' yer inter this muddle.'

'There ain't narthen ter forgive,' said Jacob hoarsely.

She lifted her lips to the man. 'Give us a kiss, Jacob, afore he dew for th' pair on us, ter show yer really ha' forgiven.' Jacob bent his face to the girl's and kissed it.

'Dang yer, Joe, make a dart at 'em. Look at that there shameless hussy, right afore her poor father tew; hit him, man, I tells yer,' roared the Terrifier.

Joe struck with his quant, but the distance was too great and it fell with a splash a foot short of Jacob's rudder. Then a blast of wind burst on the wherries and for a moment it seemed to the fascinated watchers on the *Come and Catch Me* that the *Heron* had lifted her bows from the water and was falling on top of them.

This was the moment for which Jacob had waited. He put his back to the tiller, and in a second his wherry shot right away, the space between the two boats grew greater, the *Heron* ceased to roar through the water, the waves at her bow sank away, and save for the breakers which rolled across the broad and hit her sides no water moved around her. She slowed up and then remained stationary, the huge sail, released from the cleats and the Terrifier's hand, hung flapping in the wind. The *Heron* had grounded on the mud.

'Yer be all right, Trudy, gal,' sang out Jacob. 'I told yer I'd a trick left. I knowed if I could keep him afolleren' me I'd run him on the putty. I knowed he drawed more nor me. I kept drawn' out o' th' channel, and when I seed he wor nigh atop on us I give this here boat a sheer and he did th' same, cos he kept watchen' o' me. He hit th' hard th' moment arter. Gude

on yer, gal!' he went on exultingly. 'We ha' done th' Terrifier now; he can't get off there for six hours, cos he ha' run on a rum'un.'

Jacob put his rudder over and brought his boat up into the wind and wore her right round, sailing back past the *Heron*. Joe and the Terrifier were doing their uttermost to shove her astern; the Terrifier's quant bent like a whip beneath his efforts, but all to no purpose—they were hard and fast aground. A round of curses and threats, all the more vehement because innoxious, greeted Jacob and Trudy as they passed.

The wind had lulled and the storm was over, and as the *Come and Catch Me* sailed out of the broad the sun broke through the clouds. Trudy, as she coiled her hair and shook the water from her skirts, gave a great sigh of relief. After helping to lower the sail at Potter Heigham she went into the cabin and lit the fire to make a cup of tea. Taking off her stockings, she dried them at the cheerful blaze. She and Jacob had gone through so much, suffered so many emotions in so short a time, that all barriers of restraint were broken down between them, and over their tea they chatted with the intimacy of long acquaintanceship. Her announcement that she would borrow sovereign of him and go to London to seek employment brought the first check to the flow of Jacob's conversation. He sat in silence, to all intents contemplating the rosy light shed by the sinking sun upon the marshland, and watching the movements of the hundreds of martins flying round the wherry, swooping up and down the bends of the river, settling on the reeds, and rising as one bird when the boat passed their resting-place.

'Yer must be tired, dew yer lie down a bit,' he said tenderly, as, Acle reached and the tea-things washed and put away, Trudy's heavy eye-lids fell on her cheeks.

The girl laid herself down on the bunk and was soon wrapped in profound slumber. Jacob lit his pipe and took a seat at the tiller, and, swept by the outrunning tide and gentle breeze, the *Come and Catch Me* slowly made her way to Yarmouth. The moon hung like a round of white paper in the evening sky. There was silence over everything, broken from time to time by the bang of the sail as it gybed, for the wind had veered and was now right astern. Jacob, bending forward on his seat, peered into the dusky cabin; the tired face of the sleeping girl looked to him like the pale moon overhead.

'Danged if it ain't more beautiful,' he muttered, and he

sighed as each familiar house and farmstead was passed, and he knew he was a mile or so nearer Yarmouth—and separation.

‘I don’t know what ha’ come over me—never did enjoy a trip like this here afore,’ he mused. ‘I likes th’ look o’ th’ mawther—she be made for a wherryman’s wife, she be. Poor little mite, her face be lined with sorrow; best way for her to get out o’ her trouble would be ter marry me and ha’ done with it. Should ha’ th’ law on my side then ter protect her agin th’ old Terrifier. Th’ arm o’ th’ law be strong, they say; p’raps with that here arm and mine she’d be out o’ harm’s way. I’ll wake her up and hear what she say.’

He called softly—fearing to wake her too suddenly: ‘Trudy, Trudy!’ but the girl only stirred in her sleep, turning her face from the light of the open door; to Jacob it was as if the light of the moon had been darkened by a passing cloud.

‘Trudy! Trudy!’ he called louder, and the girl heard his voice, and, with a look of fear, ran out of the cabin.

‘Is it father?’ and she anxiously scanned the evening mists for the dreaded *Heron’s* sail.

‘No, no, ‘tain’t yar father; ‘tain’t for that I ha’ waked yer,’ said Jacob, awkwardly. ‘I wants ter ha’ a say about what yer be going ter dew. I ha’ been thinken’ over that there plan o’ yars about going ter Lunnon, and th’ more I thinks on it th’ less I likes it.’

‘Why?’ asked Trudy in surprise.

‘Well, th’ smoke ‘on’t dew yer no gude. Yer’ll pine an’ die for th’ mash air and breeze.’

‘P’raps that ‘ud be th’ best thing as could happen ter me,’ Trudy answered gravely.

‘Now hold yer on, an’ don’t talk like that; yer make me feel kind o’ chokey-like in my throat, as I did last year when I wor standen’ by my mother’s grave. Yer hain’t got ter go out o’ th’ world yet, ‘tain’t likely. But what I ha’ got ter say be this: s’pose yar father follow yer ter Lunnon an’ finds yer out, which he be quite likely ter dew, what then?’

‘I’ll drown myself. I’ll put an end to my miserable life,’ the girl answered.

‘There’s another way, Trudy, gal; another way o’ putten’ an end ter yar old life,’ said Jacob softly.

‘And what’s that?’ asked Trudy.

‘Why, I told yer afore I wants a mate for th’ wherry, and I tells yer now I wants a mate for myself. Will yer take on th’

sitiuations, Trudy? I offers both on 'em ter yer, gal. Marry me, and yar father can't touch yer, we ha' th' law on our side agin him. I thought it over as yer lay on my bunk. "'Tis th' proper place for her," came inter my head, suddenlike. I can't abide th' thought o' yar leaven' th' *Come and Catch Me* in Yarmouth. Yer came aboard like a bit o' thistledown blown off th' mashes. Bits o' down often comes aboard and flies inter cabin and clings ter my mattress like limpets ter a rock. Dew yer dew th' same, and it won't be Jacob Gooden as'll try ter pluck yer off.' Jacob held out his brown hand as if to pull the girl towards him.

Trudy did not move, only bent her head, and the hot blood mounted to her cheeks. She wondered if in the fading moonlight Jacob could see how red they were. She did not answer, but began presently to sway her body to and fro.

'Yer bain't angry, Trudy?' said Jacob humbly.

'But we hardly know one another,' she broke out presently. 'Yer says: "Marry me." Why, we hain't kept company tergether yet. My sister Lottie kept company with her chap for tew years afore she married him.'

'Keepen' company an' walken' out o' Sundays be all right and proper, but 'twon't dew in this here case,' Jacob replied. 'Most people keep company afore they are married—and 'tis th' best part o' th' bargain often—but we'll ha' ter keep company arter we are wed. We can get one o' them special licences I ha' heerd tell on in Yarmouth; an' I know a parson gent—I sail his yacht for him in regattas—he'll manage th' job for us. Then we'll start keepen' company for all time. That'll be a deal better than gotten' it all over afore-hand.'

Trudy slowly moved towards the spot where Jacob was sitting and sank down on the plankways at his side. 'Listen,' she said in a whisper. 'We'll keep company till we gets ter Yarmouth, anyhow, and then I'll give yer my answer.' She nestled up to him and he put his arm round her, the other hand resting on the tiller.

'That we will, my gal. I 'on't gainsay yer. And we'll let th' *Come and Catch Me* run easy for th' rest o' th' voyage.'

CHAS. FIELDING MARSH.

A Defence of Play-reading.

THE Societies established for the reading and study of the plays of Shakespeare, and all persons who have found enjoyment in the private reading of the Elizabethan drama, have been assailed by a startling demand to know what they have to say in defence of their practice of sitting down in a drawing-room or a study and reading a play. Touchstone, when he set upon poor William in the Forest of Arden and robbed him of his only joy, was not more peremptory and insistent than some well-known critics have been in the past few weeks in their denunciation of people who think they can understand a play by reading it. There is one critic in particular who is much afflicted, and even angered, at the thought that some people read plays. He is responsible for the leading criticisms in the columns of the *Times*, and he goes out of his way so that he may proclaim his hatred of play-reading in season and out of it. Thus he has lately expressed the idea that the Examiner of Plays must be of all men most miserable, for, says he, 'he has to spend his official life in reading plays—that is to say, in putting things to a use for which they were not designed.' On another occasion he has expressed himself thus: 'You cannot "read" a play; you can only read a play-book. A play is something played; to read the book of the play may enable you to fancy what it might be like when played, but nothing more.'

Possibly this assuredness of utterance is due in part to the fact that the critic can quote the authority of Lessing, who has asked: 'What is the use of devoting yourself to the painful toil of the dramatic form, what is the use of building a theatre, dressing up men and women, putting their memory to the torture, crowding people into an auditorium, if the work when represented is only to do what would have been done by a story read with your feet on the fender?'

I have noticed that barristers engaged in opening the pleadings

on behalf of a client accused of having done something he should not have done are accustomed to assert in the first place that their client never did anything of the kind, and in the next place that if he did it he was fully entitled to do it. In the first place, then, it must be denied that the reader of a play is limited to imagining what a play would be like when acted. In the grand drama—that is, in works of literature shaped in dramatic form—there is much more than speech and action written for stage purposes. The most beautiful and familiar passages in Shakespeare are appreciated apart from their context, and apart from the fact that, introduced into plays as they are, they more or less perfectly harmonise with the dramatic story that is in progress. Often these passages have little or no essential appropriateness. Their introduction does not help the progress of the action, and with slight alterations they might just as well have been given in other plays and by other characters than in those plays and by those persons to whom they were assigned. Sometimes, indeed, Shakespeare was guilty of the artistic error of putting his most beautiful words in the mouth of a character who could not possibly have thought as he is represented as thinking. There is a notorious instance of this in the exquisite scene between Lorenzo and Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*. In this scene Shakespeare has introduced nothing that is not beautiful, and there is one splendid outburst of genius which by common consent we cherish as one of the finest examples of literature ever written. But that Lorenzo and Jessica, the vulgar-minded and dishonest people of the play, could have conceived such ideas or given them anything like such expression is altogether beyond the region of the possible. We love the passage, not because we may have heard it in a theatre—indeed, when we did we have been struck by its incongruity—and not, moreover, because of its place in this play, but because, being essentially a thing of beauty, it is a joy for ever. There are other passages in abundance of which much the same may be said. They belong to the nation's literature, and they can be, and are, enjoyed by their readers for their intrinsic beauty, with a species of intellectual delight that owes nothing to the fact that originally the speech or passage that charms us formed part of a play. There are hundreds of passages that could not have been written with any hope or expectation of their being appreciated by the audiences at Blackfriars. They were written because the poet, being a poet, had to write them to please himself and to liberate his soul.

We are therefore entitled to ask those who charge play-readers with putting a thing to wrong use to modify their charge, and to make a distinction between dramas that belong to literature and plays which are frankly devoid of literary merit. It may be conceded to them that there are doubtless hundreds of theatrical productions which no sensible man would think of reading, and yet may be enjoyed at the theatre by a sensible man in search of recreation. I have never heard of any man who wanted to read *Charley's Aunt* with his feet on the fender. And further there are plays with some literary pretensions that cannot stand the test of quiet critical reading. Let any educated person, who has thought Bulwer Lytton's *Richelieu* a rather good acting drama, sit down and read the work in cold blood, and he will be compelled to agree with the opponents of the habit of play-reading and to admit that there are dramatic works that are not capable of affording enjoyment except with all the garnishing the stage can supply. We are then driven to discriminate and to define :

A play is submitted to the highest test when it can be examined as literature apart from its actual dramatic representation. It may satisfy this test without being a good acting play, but if it will bear this examination, then its value in literature is permanent, whether it please the mob or be caviare to the general.

No one can read some of Ibsen's dramas without feeling the strange power and insight of the author, whilst the hopeless, crushing inevitableness of Mr. Pinero's tragedy *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* is brought before the reader almost as vividly as by dramatic representation. *Michael and his Lost Angel*, by Mr. H. A. Jones, did not please the town, but its readers have formed a higher opinion from it of the author's capacity than from his more successful plays. Nor do I see why I should be debarred the enjoyment of the poetry of Mr. Stephen Phillips, the wit of Sheridan, of Mr. Bernard Shaw, and of the author of *Lady Windermere's Fan* because no theatrical manager happens to be producing one of their comedies.

The greatest drama in all ages—and there is greatness in comedy as well as in tragedy—belongs to literature, and literature —‘the best that has been said and thought in the world,’ whether in dramatic or other forms—was given to be read. With Shakespeare especially, as the acknowledged king of English letters, the word ‘read’ is inadequate, unless we enlarge its scope, and add to

'read' the familiar formula 'mark, learn, and inwardly digest.' The infinite variety of Shakespeare, his power, his humanity, his criticism of life, his characteristic phrases, the signs by which we judge the progress of his skill—these are not to be exhausted by the cleverest creatures sitting at a play, nor by casual reading. A play is designed to be played, no doubt, and an oration is designed for the ears of the audience. But when the play is written by a Shakespeare or a Marlowe, and the oration is delivered by a Cicero or a Burke they have abiding qualities that make reading not only devoid of need of apology, but the neglect of reading to be without excuse.

And now I pass to the second portion of my defence. Let me recall the indictment. 'The drama in print ceases altogether to be drama.' 'The story read cannot do for you what is done by the story played, and the mental effort to make it do the same thing, or an approximation to the same thing, is exceedingly tiresome.' Surely this is a sweeping statement. The critic must really be asked to speak for himself. If he assures us that when he reads a play he cannot imagine how it would act, we must believe him, but he is not entitled to say that his painful poverty of imagination is general. Not only can it be done, but it is a common experience that it is done naturally and without effort, and that some conception of the appearance, the voice, the bearing, and the characters of drama or story, and some hazy sense of the scene amidst which the action passes, will be found to be amongst the necessary conditions of a reader's enjoyment. If, indeed, in reading a play-book we read nothing but 'words, words, words,' we should be of all men most miserable. But when we read we see with the mind's eye the man of whom we read in his habit as he lived. Our conception is wholly personal, and it may not be that which the author had, but if it be a poor thing it is our own, and its existence is necessary to our pleasure in the story, and even to our comprehension of it.

Now, every critic, amateur or professional, who sees the performance of a play which he has read, or of a play founded upon a story with which he is familiar, instinctively compares the stage pictures, the stage portraits, the stage action with the images of his own creation on his own private and mental stage. A critic may be very severe upon the practice of play-reading, but when he sees Shakespeare acted he unconsciously criticises the performance from the standard set up not only by other performances of the same play, but by his own intimate knowledge of the work

and the ideas which he has formed, perhaps unconsciously, of the way in which it should be played. It is probably owing to the great difficulty of transferring the creations of Dickens to the real stage, without the loss of the distinctive qualities which they possessed when they appeared on the private mental stage as we read the stories, that accounts for the notoriously unsatisfactory character of acted versions of Dickens; and I may quote in support of my theory of this difficulty of reconciling the ideal with the actual stage a recent criticism in the *St. James's Gazette* of the dramatic version of one of the most powerful and dramatic short stories ever written—Mr. Kipling's *The Man who Was*.

'Mr. Kipling's story,' remarks the critic, 'is intensely dramatic—to read. But stories that are "dramatic" when you read them are by no means necessarily suited for stage presentation, and *The Man who Was* seems to be emphatically unsuited for the stage. As Mr. Kipling tells the story, with his vivid touch, his intense pictorial power, his little thumb-nail sketches of character, you seem to see the whole scene and the horror and the pity of it. But put it upon the stage, show us the actual broken-down tatterdemalion who was once a British officer grovelling and grunting upon the ground, and the spell is broken.'

From this it seems to follow that there are some positive advantages and superiorities possessed by the mental stage of an intelligent reader over the theatrical stage in the way of vivid presentation, and it may be argued that, so far from resenting that intimate knowledge of the play-book which has created in an intelligent audience a high standard of demand and expectation, it is the object of our greatest actor-managers to put upon the stage a version that shall satisfy this demand and expectation as far as possible. A gentleman to whom we owe much both as an actor and as a manager, Mr. Beerbohm Tree, has just been writing a letter in which, after making the gratifying announcement that his Shakespeare revivals have been financially profitable, he says of Shakespeare's plays: 'I contend that the only useful purpose in producing his works on the stage is that they should be presented in such a manner as to bring out their full meaning, to interest an audience by the best acting, the best mounting, and the best treatment a manager can give them. Otherwise, it would surely be more satisfactory to study his works in book form.'

For this last admission play-readers will be grateful. According to one of the ablest and most successful of actor-managers,

this practice, so far from being reprehensible, is more satisfactory than seeing a stage representation without the best acting, the best mounting, and the best treatment a manager can give. With such evidence to offer, Mr. Beerbolm Tree is a valuable witness for the defence. His testimony is, in effect, that the mental stage of an intelligent reader can give a better idea of the play than that which by unavoidable limitations can be provided in the vast majority of actual performances.

I do not deny for a moment that a beautiful and intelligent stage representation of Shakespeare is a great delight in itself, and may be a great help to our better understanding of Shakespeare. One of the most intense pleasures of the theatre is the comparison between one's own ideas of a part, or of the way a sentence should be spoken, and the conception of an actor or actress of great intelligence and ability who has made the study of character a life-work. When we see a part played as we think it should be played we are pleased and praise the performer, but there are blissful moments when we are given new ideas, when new light is thrown upon familiar words, and we are surprised into joyfully admitting that the artists' tone, their expression, their action, is something truer and more illuminating than anything we had been able to evolve ourselves. Other actors than Macklin have wrung from delighted students the tribute 'This is the Jew that Shakespeare drew,' and there have been more recent actors than Edmund Kean who by native genius have 'illustrated Shakespeare by flashes of lightning.' And the play-reader is able, henceforth, to take back to his study chair and to place upon his mental stage the instantaneous photograph thus taken by the flash-light process. Every fine piece of acting, every beautiful stage picture, 'vibrates in the memory' of the intelligent reader.

Personally, whilst I think we are indebted to the Elizabethan Stage Society for its very interesting and artistic attempts to reproduce for us the conditions under which the Elizabethan drama was actually rendered in the days of the authors, and whilst I am bound to agree with Mr. A. B. Walkley that 'the plays of Shakespeare as given in the text were adapted to the machinery of the stage of the day, the customs of Elizabethan times, and the temperament of Elizabethan play-goers,' I am not prepared to admit that Shakespeare and his contemporaries would not have gladly had a more adequate representation of their works if this had been possible. Is there not a touch of pathos in the appeal of the playwright in the words allotted to 'Chorus' at the

opening of *Henry the Fifth*, that the audience should pardon the imperfection of the setting, and supplement the things seen by the things imagined?

Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth:
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings.

Whether much, and if so how much, should be left to the imagination in a theatre, how far an attempt to produce the scene which was at the background of the poet's mind may, by sheer excess of beauty, divert attention from the gem to the setting, from the portrait to the frame—these are controversial topics which concern the critics of the acted drama. As for us whose stage is mental, our withers are unwrung.

Here, then, we come to the abiding advantage that we possess who in reading the plays of Shakespeare create an imaginary stage. The setting can be perfect. We are but dimly conscious of it, but it is there. We create at will a Forest of Arden in which Rosalind and Celia travel, and it is adequate, although the scene is not so lovely that we are diverted from the action of the play to admire the art of the scene-painter and the skill of the stage-manager. We see the towering waves and we hear the roar of the hurricane driving Ferdinand and his friends to Prospero's island, and yet we are in no danger of being so delighted with the spectacle and the way in which the difficulties of presenting it have been overcome that we want a special 'call' for the management at the close of the scene. We are saved at once from the poverty of the bare and unconvincing stage of the Elizabethan period and the too gorgeous pageantry which both attracts and distracts as a spectacle. And in the characters of Shakespeare other than mortal we have a great superiority over the best conditions of the stage. The Puck of our fancy may be Shakespeare's Puck, but the Puck of the stage can never be more than a somewhat pathetic attempt to materialise the ideal. Imagination and the poet's pen were both required to 'give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name,' but the poetic imagination is not helped but hindered when the fairy forms and dainty spirits that we can picture as it were in delicate outline appear before us on the stage in most unmistakable humanity. Delicate Ariel may be played with all possible grace and charm, the elves and sprites who wait upon Titania may have been beautifully drilled, the apparitions that appear to Macbeth and to

Richard the Third may have all the help that modern stage management can supply, and the Ghost of Hamlet's Father may make our flesh creep with the aid of lowered lights and a sepulchral tone, but they are all unconvincing; at the best they are of the stage, stagey, and at the worst—?

And here once more we who set up a mental stage claim superiority. We have no bad performers in our theatre. We need no 'star' system in which the great part is finely played and the others vilely. The poetic fancy, the flashes of wit, the indications of character that Shakespeare has so often assigned to a small part will not be ruined by the woodenness of a super. And our theatre is not limited by the checks of fashion and finance that make the performance of any Shakespearian play a comparative rarity, and the performance of some almost an impossibility. There are many plays which every lover of Shakespeare knows almost by heart, yet he never has a chance of seeing them acted. The Elizabethan Stage Society has done much, but an intelligent apprehension of a reader will do more. In our mental theatre the doors may be always open, the season always on. We can at pleasure command the performance of this play or of that as if we were Royalty, and indeed without the limitations set upon Royalty of ordering only those plays which actors are accustomed to perform, and for which they have scenery ready. We have a cast perfect in all respects, and can hear every familiar line spoken with due emphasis. Need we, then, apologise for our play-reading? On the contrary, let us rejoice in it, and thank the good fortune that has given us, in a copy of the works of Shakespeare, a life-ticket and a reserved seat for the best entertainment in the world.

W. E. HICKS.

At the Sign of the Ship

HAVE we lived to hear the word 'ROT' applied, by a learned judge, sitting on the bench of British Themis, to a work styled *Lovely Woman*? I read the phrase with awe, in a recent literary libel case, if anything connected with such a book as *Lovely Woman* can be called 'literary.' To judge by the extracts, the judge did not overstate the case, and, indeed, what other word could he have used? 'Trash' is not sufficiently contemptuous. An author who says that he wishes a blameless lady had never been born, and tells a story about seeing her father eating buns, and calls such rubbish 'humorous,' must expect mankind to express with candour their views about himself and his performances. Of course he gets an advertisement by a libel action, in which no judge 'ever was heard to speak so free' as the occupant of the bench did. But most people would rather avoid advertisement altogether, or be advertised in some other way.

* *

Sensitive Scots will rejoice in this discomfiture of the author of *The Unspeakable Scot*. It was a dull book, full of personalities and devoid of delicate handling, but it was well calculated for its manifest purpose—to make my sensitive countrymen shriek aloud, and give the thing gratuitous advertisement. The English would have disregarded such an assault, the Welsh would never have heard of it, the Irish would either have laughed or used a bit of blackthorn, but the indiscreet Scot runs to his pen and writes to the newspapers, which is precisely what the assailant desires.

* * *

It is not easy to think of a good large irritable set of people, easily hurt, and, when hurt, noisy. Whom are we to abuse if we want them to advertise us? The clergy are used to it; long ago was written the book about overmuch blaming the clergy.

Solicitors are used to it ; barristers do not care ; schoolmasters, if they cry out, wail in educational journals ; and doctors have been resigned butts since the days of Molière. Butchers are sensitive, but do not use the pen in expressing just indignation, nor do plumbers. It is easy to get a rise out of booksellers, but their voices do not carry far. A general assault, with many personalities, on literary people in general, as in *The Dunciad*, is not bad, but then literary people are not so very numerous, and the world reckes not of their laments. Of course it is not difficult to stir up the Americans ; but 'there is no money,' for a British hack, in insulting the Americans or any other aliens. The late Mr. Douglas Brown, to be sure, wrote in a way far from friendly about a section of his own countrymen, but he merely won their admiration, somehow. Obviously the modes of gaining notoriety by scurrility are few, which is a fortunate circumstance.

* * *

Mrs. Meynell, in *Harper's Magazine*, writes on certain words rather in want of really good rhymes. There is a *girl*. Does *girl* rhyme to Mr. Augustine Birrell (I speak as a Scot, and do not pretend to know), or to *whirl*, or *birl* (the verb), or to Cyril ? (I think not.) To *dirl* surely *girl* rhymes, but things only *dirl* in Scots : 'My sword-hilt *dirled* against his breast-bone' is an example. *Furl*, *curl*, *churl*, and so on, do not really rhyme to *girl*, nor (to my mind) does *earl*, though poets use all these 'and what for no ?' It is pedantic to object, 'since rhyme in English hath great scarsetie.' We may rhyme 'again' to 'the Dane' or to 'men' just as we please. 'Men of training' say 'Crumwell,' Mrs. Meynell avers : cabmen say 'Cromwell.' I follow the cabmen, though cavaliers, putting a crumb in their wine, drank the toast, 'God send this crumb well down !'

* * *

It appears that Thackeray wrote, or rather dictated, 'different to,' not 'different from,' in *Esmond*, thereby sinning unpardonably. But I cannot say, without wide study, whether Queen Anne's men, whom he was imitating, said 'different from' or 'different to.' Do ladies usually say 'tropæolum' or 'tropæolum' ; 'gladiolus,' or 'gladiolus' ; 'octopus,' or 'octopus' ; 'Bredalbane,' or 'Bredalbane' ; 'Öban,' or 'Öban' ? Mrs. Meynell says 'Otel,' and informs us that Americans say 'hotel,' as we also do,

and mean to continue to do, north of 'the resolute and glittering streams of Tweed.' That '*hôtel*' is French has nothing to do with the pronunciation of hotel in English, which is most undefiled in the Border counties. I have heard a lady say she was 'a tome' (as if she had been a book in petticoats), and wondered how she pronounced the name of the Earl of Home, Ome or Home, or Ume or Hume? Americans pronounce 'station' as 'dee-pô,' at least I have heard one American do so, and venture on a hasty generalisation. Their spelling and their rhymes tell us how our ancestors pronounced. Can you guess what a lady in the Verney Papers (about 1650) meant by 'Sentabornes'? She meant St. Albans. The Scots in the eighteenth century pronounced the 'a' in 'paper' as newsboys do, 'piper'; and when they needed a 'y' in 'supply,' wrote 'supplay,' because 'ay,' as in 'day,' was by them sounded as 'y' in 'supply.' How this pronunciation came to leave Scotland and reach the cockneys is a great mystery. Is it right or wrong to rhyme 'corn' to 'dawn,' like Mr. William Morris; and 'warning' to 'dawning,' like Mr. Swinburne; and 'tortured' to 'orchard,' like Mr. —? I have known a Scots poet make 'world' a word of two syllables, 'wurruld,' in his verse, very naturally, for he pronounced it as such. Why does 'Bosanquet' become 'Bossanquet' in the kingdom of Fife? Why do Americans write, as Mr. Howells does, 'all the time,' when Britons write 'always'? Is 'always' wrong? In old Scots it seems to mean 'nevertheless'; in verse-making we generally use 'ever,' not 'always,' when we mean 'all the time.'

* * *

Mr. Howells says that Goethe was not happy all the time; 'in his whole life he had not known fifteen minutes of continuous happiness.' I don't believe that Goethe told the truth if he said that, but, if so, all his salmon, I suppose, were landed under the fifteen minutes. Perhaps the most continuous happiness I remember was in watching Mr. Jardine and Mr. V. T. Hill and Mr. G. O. Smith smack Cambridge bowling, which they did for hours and hours. I mean that this was not happiness, but unmingled ecstasy. One has been happy for months at a time. 'I have been happy thinking,' says Burns, and probably he adds 'drinking.' Goethe must have 'been happy, thinking.' Perhaps if we were happy all the time we should not know that we were happy. We have plentiful opportunities of knowing, as this life is arranged.

Here is some literary intelligence. I only alter names. 'We are informed that the title of Mr. Boshers new work, which it is after all expected will be published in the autumn by Mr. Schneiper, is to be *The Unjust Steward*. The title suggests' (here the *communiqué* comes in) 'that the author has returned to the broad human themes by which he won his laurels in *The Boomster* and *The Bandsman*. Forsaking the social, religious, and political questions of the day, *he has chosen this Biblical title to indicate that although the narrative is placed in a modern setting, amid scenes partly Irish, partly Kamschatkan, yet the appeal is elemental in its characteristics*.' Is this not thrilling? Oh for Autumn! Observe the astuteness of the author. 'He has chosen this Biblical title' (it might be *The Woman of Samaria*, or *A Citizen of No Mean City*) 'to indicate that the narrative is placed in a modern setting.' How in the world does it indicate that? There were unjust stewards in the time of Hammurabi (say 2300 B.C.) and long before. Indeed the casual hearer of the phrase as *The Unjust Stuart* suspects an historical novel of 1603-1688. Again, the subtlety by which a Biblical title indicates that the scenery is 'partly Kamschatkan, partly Irish' (only the names are altered), while, though the scenery is partly Irish, 'the appeal is elemental,' transcends the comprehensive significance of Lord Burleigh's nod, in *The Critic*. Why should not an appeal be elemental wherever the scenery is? An author who could discover that a Biblical title indicates all that mass of information is wise when he lets the January public into the secret of September. In seven months the pensive public would not have discovered that a Biblical title indicates an elemental appeal in Irish and Arctic scenery.

* * *

LINES WRITTEN ON READING A PUFF PRELIMINARY.

Oh, give me the gay 'elemental appeal,'

Unvexed by your fiscal statistics!

In the scenes of Kamschatka I'm eager to feel

(What Boshers is equally fain to reveal)

'Elemental' old 'characteristics'!

Once more give us themes that are 'human' and 'broad,

And away with your dry chrematistics!

We are anxious to walk in an easier road,

And to study what Boshers by then shall have showed,

'Elemental' old 'characteristics'!

The Biblical title distinctly discloses
 That the Bible is out of the book ;
 We are *not* to be puzzled by Germans on Moses,
 But wander with Bosher and Love in the roses,
 Like tourists conducted by Cook !

* * *

Some one was talking lately of an omniscient person ; it is quite a common phrase. But, when we reflect, the term is vain ; the most learned of us are only children, filling our little wallets with a few shells and pebbles picked up on the shingly beach of General Information. In my tender and truant infancy I got only one school prize one year, and my kinsfolk justly remarked that I ought to be ashamed of myself, because it was obtained, not by historical, classical, arithmetical, or geographical industry, but merely by the spontaneous and automatic accretion of General Information. My wallet was quite as full of useless knowledge as it could be, but it was such a tiny satchel ! So it is with all of us ; we gather the shells and pebbles that please us, and neglect the large, obvious flints and other common objects of the sea-shore. Who could have answered out of his own head, and without book, the questions in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* competition ? I do not believe that any one who may cast his eye over this page could floor, without book, the following

GENERAL PAPER.

1. What is meant by 'Latitude' and 'Longitude' ? Is it scientific to say that 'the world is as long as it is broad ?' If not, state whether it is longer or broader. Respectfully discuss the qualities of the Equator.

2. Apart from tradition, what reasons have you for supposing that the earth goes round the sun ?

3. Who was the Government spy in Lochaber in 1748 ? Give a brief account of his later history, and state all you know about Blairmachfiddoch.

[A copy of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (edition of 1853) will be presented to the first candidate who answers this question correctly.]

4. What was the profession and Christian name of the father of Francis, fourth Viscount Castlewood ? How old was this jolly gentleman at the time of his fatal duel with Lord Mohun ? How old was his widow, Rachel, when she married Colonel Henry Esmond ?

5. Who shot the Red Fox?
6. Who blew up the Parthenon?
7. Whose father was 'struck down by the side of the gallant Collingwood in the Bay of Fundy'?
8. Who said 'No man is a hero to his dentist'?
9. Explain 'Papalian,' 'Gourdanian,' 'Arisian,' 'Asylian,' and *symbolisme pélecycque*.
10. Define the status of an *Unjipinna*. Who has to give what to his *Unjipinna*, and why? In what circumstances of a legal nature would an *Unjipinna* say, 'Keep your hair on'?
11. What is an *Untungalirima*? Prove, by the expression 'Claw me and I'll claw thee,' that the *Untungalirima* was once an element in the religion of Scotland.
12. Prove that a Little Loaf is the palladium of Britain's greatness, and is too big for a Little Englander.

* * *

Of these questions I put 1, 2, and 12 for the sake of information, because I do not know the answers. I respectfully think most men, women, and children could answer 1 and 2; that I only can answer 3; that 4 is rather a catch question; that the reply to 5 is mainly in the possession of a limited Celtic circle; that Mr. A. E. W. Mason can answer 6; that 7 ought to be solved by every person of letters; that 8 (though the reply is matter of certain knowledge) will generally be the subject of random shots; that correct answers to 9 will be scarce; that 10 and 11 *may* be solved, without book, by several Cambridge men; and that 12 does not admit of a satisfactory solution.

* * *

There are funny questions asked in *The Academy*, such as 'Why the Popes assume new names on coming to the Papacy.' Obviously 'as not wishing to bring disgrace on their families.' What Protestant scholar suggested this solution, and what was the family name of Pope Joan? 'Not fit to hold the candle to him': is this a pure colloquialism, or can it be found in standard writers? One may add, on the seal of what university do we see the candle-holder in the exercise of his functions? 'I am proverbial with a grandsire phrase, to be a candle-holder and look on': surely that is a quotation not hard to trace. The

same learned paper advertises a list of 'Publishers' Mediums,' a strong proof of the growth of spiritualism in our midst. I can recommend an excellent Medium, with or without glass ball.

* *

Talking of Mediums reminds me of a curious case of eccentricities in memory. A lady had been making very successful experiments in crystal-gazing, some five years ago. Let us call her Miss Z. My memory is that a friend, say Mr. B., told me that she had tried an experiment for him, that he thought of the Viscountess P. (who was then with her husband on a diplomatic mission to the Court of Nova Zembla), and that Miss Z. saw, first, a street covered with snow and crowded with sledges, and then a large *salon*, in which a stately lady, alone, was apparently about to hold a reception. (I alter names of places, of course.) My recollection is that I told my friend that I thought the experiment fairly successful in representing the object of his thought—the Viscountess X. at her Arctic place of temporary residence. Three years later, say two years ago, my friend, Mr. B., when I spoke to him of the circumstance, denied that it ever occurred. Miss Z., in his case, he now said, had seen nothing; the glass ball, as Dr. Dee puts it, had 'preserved his natural diaphaneity.' A month or two ago, the subject again turned up in talk. Mr. B. now averred not only that the crystal vision had never occurred, but that I had never reminded him of it two years ago.

* *

Now, is a positive memory, like mine, or a negative memory, like Mr. B.'s, the more trustworthy in point of evidence? I remember the very spot where he, to my thinking, told me the tale. Could I have invented it, and been taken in by my own invention? Mr. B. might, for reasons, very well have selected Lady X. as an object of thought in such an experiment, and nobody else among my acquaintances, at the place where we were living, was likely to do so. Could I have invented the snow, and the sleighs, and the *salon*? I really cannot persuade myself that I invented all this. However, I wrote to Miss Z., asking whether she had ever 'sried' for Mr. B., and, if so, to what result. She replied that she had no memory of the matter, but only remembered one total failure of hers to see anything, at the

house of Mr. C. (or in his company), where certainly Mr. B. was present. I then asked her whether snow and sleighs brought anything to her memory, and that is all the clue which, two or three days later, I *remembered* having given by letter, though I could not be certain that I had not given more. Miss Z. now replied that, when she thought of snow and sledges, she saw a clear mental picture of a great *salon*, brilliantly lighted up. There was an impression of the presence of many people, but she only *saw* a stately lady alone. This seemed pretty good, but I asked Miss Z. to try to find my letter, and to quote my actual words. She did so, and found that I had said, 'Are you reminded of anything by snow, sleighs, *and a tall lady alone in a room?*' When she replied to my question she had forgotten (and so had I) that the words italicised occurred in my letter. Her answer about the empty reception-room, brilliantly lighted, exactly corresponded to my memory of what my friend, Mr. B., told me five years ago. So the question is, did Miss Z.'s fancy unconsciously construct that scene out of my words, which she had forgotten when she wrote, '*a tall lady alone in a room*'? And is my positive memory or Mr. B.'s negative memory the more likely to be correct?

* *

I did not record the experiment at the time because Miss Z. was making so many startling successes that only a selection was formally written out and attested. I find, on examining these records, that she twice visited, in two months, the place where Mr. B. and I were residing, and I think that the experiment, which I alone remember, was made on one of these visits, and the entire failure, in presence of Mr. C., during the other. But neither Miss Z. (who, of course, is not a professional) nor Mr. B. remembers anything at all about the experiment. Am I 'a dom leear,' like the Peebles man who, on returning to the Tweed, found that it was not, as he had asserted in India, wider than the Ganges?

* *

There is an article, 'The Creeds and the Clergy,' by the Rev. Hastings Rashdall, in *The Independent Review*, which suggests to the lay mind the propriety of printing a special prayer-book, without the Creeds, for clerical use. It is a very unpleasant thing for

a gentleman in holy orders to declare, daily, that he believes what he does not believe. Such a man has just one honest course before him—a course that honest men have often taken—namely, to divest himself of his white neck-tie, and adopt some other profession than that of a minister of the Church of England as by law established. If great numbers of the sceptical clergy took this step, then the authorities spiritual would be constrained to devise new formulæ, to which these clergymen and others like them might be able to assent with honesty. ‘The late Professor Robertson Smith,’ by the way, was *not* ‘deprived of his position in the Church of Scotland,’ as Mr. Rashdall says, because of the Church of Scotland he was not a member. In all probability that Church would have permitted him to investigate Semitic Totemism undisturbed.

* . *

This subject is obviously much too serious for discussion here, but we may take a military analogy. ‘A soldier only has his orders.’ But a devout Presbyterian soldier would have had no excuse for suppressing Presbyterianism by the sabre under Charles II., nor would a French Catholic soldier be justified in dispersing members of religious orders. Either the Presbyterian or the Catholic would feel obliged to send in his papers, if his orders were such as he could not conscientiously execute.

* . *

The old question, ‘Is it ever right to tell a lie?’ turns up in this controversy. A downright ‘No’ (according to Father Holt, S.J., in *Esmond*) is not criminal, but, on the contrary, praiseworthy. ‘For instance’ (he says), ‘suppose a good citizen who had seen his Majesty take refuge there, had been asked, “Is King Charles up that tree?” his duty would have been not to say “Yes” —so that the Cromwellian soldiers should seize the King and murder him like his father—but “No”; his Majesty being private in the tree, and therefore not to be seen there by loyal eyes.’ In fact, it would have paid just as well to say, with a grin, ‘Yes, his sacred Majesty has just shinned up the tree,’ for the Cromwellian soldiers would have thought you were chaffing them, and would have boxed your ears and ridden on. In several historical anecdotes this set of events is said to have occurred. To the lay mind

to say 'No!' seems certainly wrong, very wrong. But one would have done it, for all that, unless a 'Yes,' delivered with a certain air (as if you wished to see an Ironside climb a tree in boots and spurs), seemed better business. Mr. Rashdall 'does not know the name of any living ethical writer of the smallest consideration by whom it has been maintained that it is self-evident that we ought never to make an untrue statement under any possible circumstances.' I am not an ethical writer, but I think it self-evident that we should never lie, 'not if it was ever so,' as Facey Rumford says. But, though I ought not to lie, as in the case of the King in the tree, I *would* lie, and do what I ought not to do. But my ingenuous blushes would make my lie of no effect. Of course one would equally have lied had a Regicide, or even Milton, been up the tree, pursued by Royalists.

* * *

The Rev. Richard Cameron, from whom the Cameronians derive their name, when pursued daily, and in daily danger, told the country people—if obliged to give a 'Yes' or 'No' to questions as to his whereabouts—never to lie. Cameron had unsympathetic points in his character and conduct, but one must respect him when he preferred the veracity of his flock to his own safety. It is not a question of the morality of lying in time of war, because each side admits that, in war, to deceive the foe is permitted by the rules of the game. How, again, would you justify lying about the King in the oak-tree on the ground that it 'promoted, on the whole, the true good of human society'? Only omniscience could tell whether it would, or would not, promote the good of human society. As a matter of fact, a lie which saved Charles's life in the oak-tree would not have promoted the good of human society. Had he been executed his brother, James, would have succeeded to his rights, would have had no time to read the Anglican divines who converted him to Catholicism by the feebleness of their arguments against it, would have lived and died a Protestant king, and would have saved human society from the Revolution of 1688. Nobody can tell what the results of an action may be, but any one can see that lying is bad form. None the less, given a political fugitive up a tree, every one almost would deliberately lie to save the man's life, which things are a paradox. Mr. Rashdall says that 'Truth is . . . an end in itself,' but has sometimes to be sacrificed to a greater good. The saving

of Carolus Rex was not a greater good than Truth, and yet I doubt if any Roundhead gentleman, had he (like Everard in *Woodstock*) known where the King was concealed, would have told the truth to military inquirers. It is a good old problem of debating societies.

ANDREW LANG.

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